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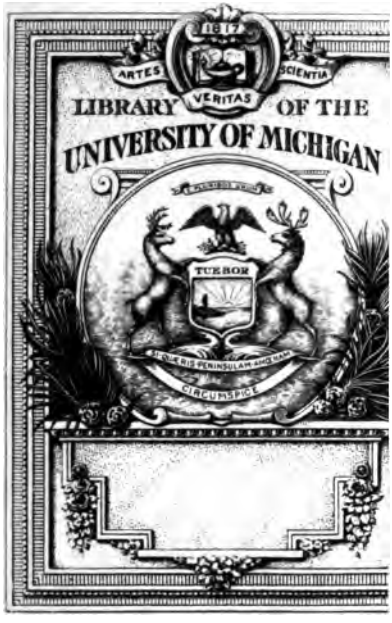

THE GIFT OF
William Warner Bisho

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UNIV. OF MICH.

A SEQUEL

TO

MINISTERING CHILDR

BY

MARIA LOUISA CHARLESWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "MINISTERING CHILDREN," "ENGLAND'S YEOMEN," AFTERNOONS IN THE NURSERY," ETC.

VOL. II.

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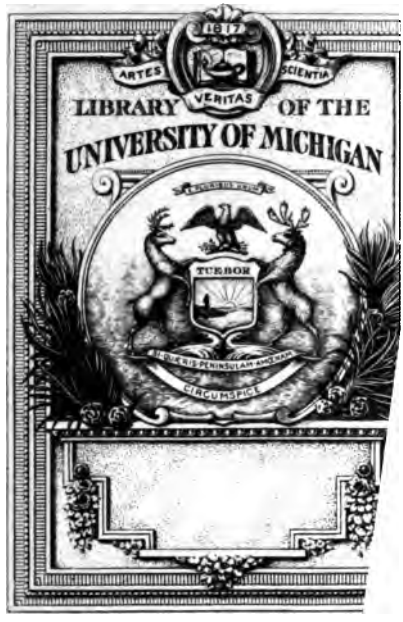

THE GIFT OF
William Warner Bis

MINISTERING CHILDREN.

A SEQUEL.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTMAS came at length, with glowing hearts and glowing hearths to warm old winter's frost-bound brows. With carols, too, and sacred hymns, warbling beneath the sheltering eaves of home in joy more thankful and enduring than that which wakes with leaf and flower the minstrelsy of spring. Christmas came — that midnight hour that hallowed earth forever, as the human birthplace of Heaven's Eternal King. Well then might earth rejoice, as from adoring hearts the strains breathed forth, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." When angels sang the advent of the Prince of Peace above the hills of Bethlehem no answering hymns arose; but now the angel hosts may hear from every land the hallelujahs rise, hailing the day that celebrates the

Saviour's birth. One gift alike for all, for each; able to fill each heart with the unfailing bliss of heaven.

Constance and Alfred had various hiding-places from which gladness was to break on Christmas morning. It were in vain to try to tell all the plans that were devised, the parcels of many sizes that never could have been known from one another, if directions had not been bestowed upon them; the wreaths and garlands that were to decorate the room where all the lone old people — those who had none to share their Christmas joy with — were to come and dine with Alfred, Constance, and little Maud; the bright red cloaks, such as Herbert once gave to Widow Jones, one or two of which were given each year; the large gay handkerchiefs to be worn over old women's shoulders, or little shawls for the same purpose in winter; the warm stockings and white embroidered frocks for the old men; and amongst the most admired of all gifts, the little black silk bonnets made by Mrs. Cox. None were ever like them, so pretty, close-fitting, and so good, with an antique grace of style that no modern milliner could give; only Mrs. Cox, who had waited on the noble presences of a generation now gone by, and knew how to make a thing look worth the wearing in a way none other could.

Patience always had some little Christmas gift from Lady Gertrude's hand, in dear remembrance

of that gift of long ago that first brought love and life and hope to the child benumbed in misery; and these gifts were to Patience dear beyond all price. There were also school plans, and thoughts for the sick, that every one upon that day of gladness might rejoice in earthly comfort as well as heavenly peaoe. That peace, indeed, men cannot make another heart partaker of. We may kindle a smile of earth around those we love; but the peace of God, the peace that Jesus came to give, he only who made the heart can open it to take that blessing in.

Ivy Lane was not forgotten; the attic where Widow Garson and her son lived, and her children, Rachel and Sammy. Alfred and Constance did not know the blind man and little Sue, and others who lived not far away, who were glad in heavenly thoughts of that Christmas-day; but those they did know they remembered, and this was all that children could do. The parcel was large that was going to Ivy Lane, for there were blankets in it, and a warm shawl for the widow; a little coat, too, for Sammy, and a book for Rachel, with materials for a plum-pudding. The parcel had been tied up in strong brown paper and string by Mrs. Cox and Mercy, and the children were to take it in with Mrs. Brame the day before; but it was not to be opened until Christmas morning. The large parcel was laid in the front of the pony-carriage, under the rejoicing eyes of Constance and Alfred; and as they went in

they had many questions to ask of Mrs. Brame, as the expected effect that the parcel would produce — whether it would be kept all night in the room where Widow Garson and her children slept, so that they would see it again as soon as they awoke? and whether they would know they might open it then? and what they would be likely to say when they did open it? and whether they would open it before they had their breakfast, or after?

Mrs. Brame was bewildered. "My dears, what questions you do ask! How should I know, unless I had been there? and what in the world can it signify? They will have a good pair of blankets, and other comforts beside, and I am sure that must be enough!"

The groom who was driving them was once the little Johnny Lambert, Widow Lambert's only child, who watched so long for Snowflake and his lady in the lane. He was now a grown man, and had been trained in stable-work at the Hall from a boy; he had always done all he could to support his poor widowed mother; she had never wanted food or firing, and always paid her rent with her Johnnie's help. She thought there was not a lad like her Johnny! and now he was a man grown and head-groom at the Hall. He heard all the children said to Mrs. Brame, and the questions they asked, and he thought to himself he wished he could have answered, for he could guess pretty well how it all was

likely to be; he knew by the feeling of his own dear widowed mother, and the little surprises he liked to get up for her. But as Mrs. Brame was in charge he could not say a word, or did not like to venture. Poor little Constance, quite discouraged, said, "O Brame, I do wish you could tell!" But little Alfred said, softly, "Never mind, Consy; let us sit still and 'magine!"

Arrived at Ivy Lane, John the groom ran upstairs with the parcel, while Mrs. Brame, not without some alarm, held Zarepha; but Zarepha was used with her lady to stop at the homes of the poor, and was much more disposed to wait quietly there than at the gates of the rich. John ran up with the great parcel; he felt glad at its weight: there was no mistaking the room, the one black attic door. John knocked. Rachel opened; and when John went in he took off his hat, as he would on entering the homes of the rich, and he said, "A parcel, ma'am, from the Hall. Mrs. Brame and my young master and miss are waiting below. Shall I lay it down here?" The table received the large parcel, and John ran downstairs again.

"We shall not be long," said Mrs. Brame to the groom; "I know the air will be cold."

And Mrs. Brame and the children went up the stairs. Sammy was within, for his little boots were out mending, and this pleased Constance and Alfred; they stood by the table while Mrs. Brame said, —

"My young gentleman and lady have brought you some cheer for Christmas, and I have brought you from my lady another sovereign for rent."

Constance and Alfred saw the poor widow receive her sovereign, the rent being only one shilling a week; this left money each quarter for firing, and kept the widow and the fatherless warm. They saw the eyes that were attracted in surprise to the parcel, saw the thin look of the bed, saw Sammy's smile of delight and his little hands rubbed together, as he peeped round the table to see another side of the parcel. It was not to be opened until the next morning, which would be Christmas-day; and then Mrs. Brame added, —

"I think it is coming on cold, almost like a fall of snow, so we must not stay," and she wished Mrs. Garson good-day. Constance and Alfred cast a lingering look back on the faces that gathered at the open attic door, and a corner of the parcel they had been watching over so long could still be seen by them, when Mrs. Brame said, "Now, don't look behind you; mind where you are going, or you will fall down the stairs."

On the way home there was a steep hill, at which it was usual for good walkers to alight and climb it on foot. Mrs. Brame conformed to this rule, but would not let the children, lest they should be heated and catch cold in the chill of the air. The groom kept beside Zarepha with the reins in his hand,

and Mrs. Brame walked behind. A poor man, who seemed a village-laborer, was on the road; he had his arm in a sling, and walked slowly up the hill, as if his way had been long. Mrs. Brame's sympathies were now open-eyed; she observed what she saw in a way she did not before. The electric cord had been duly strung between her eye and her heart. She said kindly, "Have you met with a fall on these frosty days?"

"No," he answered sorrowfully; "I broke my arm by a fall from the granary stairs, overbalanced by a sack. I have been in the hospital in the town nine weeks, the fracture was such a bad one that they haven't known how it would end until just lately. They do say it will be all right again now, and I am sure I hope it may; for I have six little mouths to feed, and that's enough for a strong pair of arms."

"And they have kept house and home without you?" asked Mrs. Brame.

"No," answered the poor man; "when we found what a bad job it was likely to be, my poor wife was forced to go into the workhouse with the children, not to run in debt that way; but we kept on the house that we might have a home, and 'tis neatly furnished too, for we saved before we married. And when my wife found I was mending, she did beg of me so to be home by Christmas-day; so she is coming out of the workhouse with the children, and we shall meet there to-night."

ıave been in a club," said Mrs.
you would have had help through

ɔrst of it," said the poor man. "I
ıd it broke, and a hundred poor fel-
vings like me. Some of them lay
ey say they will never be for saving
ıink since I have been in the town
om the doctors at the hospital of one
oned. I mean to talk to some of
ıem to try again, but I don't see how
children on hand now. But my mas-
ıee me, and he says he'll set me on in
I can stand work again."
have nothing in hand on coming
ɜ?"
ıt what I can get on credit; the neigh-
n honest, and my wife is the right sort
ı out of little. So, with the blessing
t we shall work our way round."
as now waiting at the top of the hil
ıe felt a little flurried; turning to tl
ɜaid, "I must lend you a helping ha
ome to-night." And taking out h
the bright sovereign, that had l
ess for weeks, into his hand.
" said the poor man, holding his h
looking at Mrs. Brame in unbelie

"I know it," said Mrs. Brame, who thought he wished to inform her; "take care you don't lose it!" And Mrs. Brame hastened into the carriage, and they started briskly for home.

The children had seen the poor man with his arm in a sling walking beside Mrs. Brame, and now they turned their little faces to look after him.

"O Brame, see that poor man! look back at him Brame!"

Mrs. Brame looked. He had knelt down under the hedge on the roadside, frosty and hard, with his hands clasped in thanksgiving. A tear rose to Mrs. Brame's eye, and a flush to her cheek, as she said, "Poor man! he was in trouble, and I helped him a little."

How many there are we meet unobserved, whom if we knew, we should discover in them much to win our interest and regard; but, as was written once of old, so it might almost be said now, our eyes are holden that we should not know them. Is this because we are unready for them? Or it may be that some one else is appointed to minister to those whose necessity lies hid from us.

Little Sue was to have a happy Christmas this year. Christmas to her was always happy, for her blind father did not twist his willow withes on that day; they went to church in the morning, and then he and his child and the dog took a long winter's walk. He always managed a bright fire on Christ-

r, and some little gift for his child; and
her the blessed story of Bethlehem's Holy
and the songs of angels heard on earth; and
de her understand that those angel-songs had
:en heard in this fallen world since the day
ıdam sinned, until that new life was given in
oly child Jesus, in whom a new creation arose,
which God was well pleased. But this was to
warmer Christmas day than she had ever seen
ɔre, or ever expected to see. Zarepha had not
ɯn the only carriage that visited Ivy Lane that
y. In the morning, a four-wheeled chaise drove
wn the whole length of Ivy Lane, and those
thin looked out as if on inquiry. "There it is,
see a basket!" said the comfortable-looking gen-
man who held the reins, and he drew up before
e basket-maker's shop. "There he sits; and
ere's the dog, and the child looking out from a
om within." Little Sue came forward and curt-
:d, for she remembered Mr. Burton, whose fac
e now saw over the lower half of the door.
"Open the door, my dear; I have brought m
fe and child to see you all to-day. Here, lit
:ss," he said to the child in his arms, "there l
e dog; run in, he wont hurt you: that's the g
g that saved you, you know."
Little Bess looked very shy, and turned roun
r mother, who by this time was out of the carr
d she led her in.

Benjamin Tovel rose. "You are very good to remember us, sir, and bring the lady and the dear little child; pray, how do she hold?"

"Quite well; a little, rosy, romping girl; are you not, Bess? Do you hear that kind man is asking for you? Come here, and stroke the good dog."

"Sue," said her father, "have you given the lady a chair?" and little Sue fetched one from the small room within.

"And now the gentleman," said Benjamin Tovel.

"Oh, no, thank you; I do very well."

"Pray, be seated, sir. I don't know that I ever had such an honor before as a call from the gentry, except they wanted to buy; and yet I say wrong, for there be one dear young lady in and out here, ay times without number. She's a wonder, though she's so young, for cheering you on."

"Glad to help those in poverty, no doubt," said Mr. Burton, now seated on the chair Sue had brought, with little Bess on his knee.

"'Tis not this world's good things she can bring, sir. They do say she is poor; ay, as poor, for a lady, as we are in our lot; but the sunshine bides on her, and that riches can't give."

"You can feel it, if you can't see it," Mr. Burton said.

"Ah, sir, 'tis the light that dark eyes can't shut out; and when they have it, whose education is far above ours, it lifts the spirit up to hold a little discourse.'

"Who is [illegible] Burton.

"Miss [illegible] father is blind,—an officer, they [illegible] he in the town."

"I have seen [illegible] Mr. Burton to his wife; "don't y[illegible]er a lind gentleman with a lovely girl by [illegible]? I r[illegible]lly think the dog remembers the [illegible]!" had come up to the child, looked at [illegible] aid himself down by her. "What a [illegible] he would be if well kept! But I must say [illegible] than he did."

"He is bou[illegible] to do so, ; for it is by your charity he is f[illegible]"

"My gratitude, you should say," replied Mr. Burton. "If I could keep you happy without him, I would buy him at any price."

"I am afraid sir, you could only keep him chained."

"Why so? He is not fierce, is he?"

"Not now, sir, while free; but he is that faithful nature he would break through anything but iron to be back with Sue and me."

"Well, if he had not been your dog, he would not have been by at my hour of need; so I ought not to grudge him to you; only we must come and look after him now and then: you wont object to that? I should not like my little Bess to forget him; nor you and the child either. Bess, what do you say to that dear little girl? She took your head on her lap when the good dog brought you out of the river"

Mrs. Burton had all this time had her kind looks, —now on the dog, now on little Sue.

"What a tiny-limbed child she is!" said Farmer Burton. "Don't you think we could stouten her up a little?" he said to his wife, who looked at Sue, and said, "Would you like to come and see my little girl in her home?"

Little Sue was standing by her father, and she slipped her hand in his, as if for security, and curtsied, and said softly, "No, thank you." And her father answered, "I fear, sir, my life is bound up in the life of my child, and if she went from me, her father would die."

Mr. Burton looked on the wan, yet peaceful face of the blind man; but, in his own hearty sense of life, he replied, "No, no, my good friend; we are not bound together like that; each life by itself is supported by God."

"You are right, sir," said Benjamin Tovel; "but I doubt its being well for the little one to go; she is used now to the poverty that has long been our lot, and she would not bear it the better for seeing a change."

"Well, that may be, I grant; but, Bessy, what have you brought? A Christmas-box, hey?" Saying this, Mr. Burton went to the carriage, and returned with a bale in his arms. "There," he said. "that is a little Christmas cheer from my little girl; you must open it when time serves you best.

Now, Bessy, say good-by; and with kindest farewells they parted.

The bale, tied up in l g, was lifted by Benjamin Tovel into the all ack-room, while little Sue, in wondering de l t down by it to help her father untie the gr t l . But, when opened, who shall describe the (ort unfolded in that little back-room for the l an and his child! A warm pair of blankets, thr which no cold would come; a complete suit of clothes for Benjamin Tovel; a red cloak for little Sue, with warm flannel besides; and a new collar and bag of meal, written upon, "For the dog."

There could be little sleep expected that night; it was worth while lying awake to enjoy the feeling of warmth. And this was Christmas-tide, when the night is dear as the day, and full of thoughts that should for evermore hallow the darkness. The night when angel wings fanned the air, and the songs of heaven made the music of (h, and when He who inhabiteth eternity lay cr l a tender infant in the arms of a woman. T night when in thi fallen world there rose the f h spring of that rive of God's pleasures, whose ntle flow has neve ceased making the wilde and the solitary pla glad, and the desert rej e l blossom as the ro But little Sue did fall so sweetly asleep, lull by warmth of soft l , with a bl 1 on cheek that the blind fat felt when he l ssed

and the peace of that Christmas night brooded over her pillow.

How was it with Edith and Charley at this Christmas-tide? Poor children! they had not been well content, for they could not hold by themselves the higher level to which they had been raised by a friend. Miss Mansfield was gone home for her holidays, and the idle time proved more wearying to her little pupils than lesson-days had been with her Charley wanted to go and see his little cripple friend, Me; was afraid the poor boy would think he had forgotten him, and would forget all he had learned in his lesson-book, too; but Mrs. Collins said she could not allow him to go until Miss Mansfield returned. Then Charley wanted to read; but the hard names turned him back without a friend by his side. Edith sorted her little work-box, and her colored prints in her drawer, and her gay wools for knitting; but as yet she had not learned to do anything alone. The time was but short, only six months, since Miss Mansfield came; another six months, and we may hope they will be less helpless alone; or, rather, we may trust these dear children will be learning the blessed truth, that there is a Friend always beside us, near, though unseen; that learning of him, we can, however young, find happy employment in our work or our play, and overcome difficulties, and find interests around us within doors or without, wherever we may be. But Charley and Edith did not un-

derstand this as yet; they thought only of Miss Mansfield, and wished she had not gone away.

"I shall tell her she must not go away any more," said Charley; "no one else can want her so much as we do."

"O Charley!" said Edith, "you know Miss Mansfield has brothers and sisters too, and of course they want to see her; you must not say so."

On Christmas-day Edith presented her first knitting to her mother, — a shawl of beautiful colors, the labor of many hours.

"Did you make this, my dear? How clever, I am sure!"

There were splendid gifts for Edith and Charley, but they had had so many that they did not think much about them; for when grand things are plentiful they give no more pleasure than common. And the children thought of Miss Mansfield, and Me, and his sister, little Meggie, with more interest than of all Christmas gifts and toys. And no voice told them sweet tales of the little mountain village, and the blessed Infant in the manger, and the love that brought him there, as the spring of all Christian and Christmas joy in this redeemed world.

At the Hall little Constance said, "Call us early, dear Cox; call us early, — will you promise? You know it is Christmas-day really to-morrow;"

the long pleasure of preparation had made Christmas seem to come earlier.

"Call me, too," said Alfred. "But I mean to wake myself, and be up very early; I have a great many things to do."

And little Maud would have echoed the voices, but she lay already in slumber, like countless infants of earth, whom that Infant of Bethlehem came as on that night to redeem from evil.

The day came at last; and the children awoke, and glad voices were heard in warm greetings. They seemed to say, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Let us look a moment in another village on that Christmas morning. A father stands ready dressed for the service at church, his children gathering round him; he has a hand for one, the other hand is bound in a sling. The mother is tying on the youngest girl's bonnet, and the baby is ready.

"I have put the plum-pudding on to boil, and I shall soon overtake you," said the happy voice of the mother; "for I am sure such unlooked-for help and goodness calls us to give thanks as well for the body as for the soul! There, you run with father, and mother will be coming."

Mrs. Brame kept her own quiet Christmas amidst the gladness around. One while a passing thought showed her Widow Garson and her neatly-clad children stepping happy to church. Another, she felt

glad that she had aid at hand to give, at the o
moment she could have given, to the disabled fath
She thought of the "Were there not ten cleans
but where are the nine? there are not found t
returned to give glory to God save this strange
How swift his thanksgiving spread its glad wi
to heaven! how slow she felt hers had often be
when it waited for night, and was perhaps in
weariness forgotten then! and Mrs. Brame t
home to her own heart the lesson of thanksgi-i
So passed the Christmas. "Glory to God in t
highest; on earth peace, and good-will to men."

CHAPTER II.

"I HAD mice in my room last night, Fentyman; you really must find out what brings them," Mrs. Collins said to her housekeeper. "I must have the house searched. The state of nerves in which I lay last night, expecting to see one on the curtain or pillow, has completely overset me to-day. The nibbling was something distressing; it seemed to me to be in the wall between my room and the school-room."

"The walls are good enough," replied Fentyman; "it could not be in them: but I will see to the closet in the school-room."

"Whatever it may be, you must find it out, and get rid of it before another night, or I shall be ill with broken rest!"

The housekeeper proceeded to a personal search, and, hid away in the school-room closet, she found at each far corner a little heap of such good things as mice particularly like. There was in each corner a slice of Christmas-cake, wrapped up in paper, paper and cake both nibbled round; there were also additions in the form of sweetmeats, oranges, raisins, and

almonds, — all ... it neatness, as if with extreme care, and ... ed little mice had not displaced their ... had only nibbled in every direction.

"Now, M... C... v... put all these things here?" said ... s. I ... ty ... as the child entered the room.

"O Fenty, what are you d... g? Don't touch that closet; it is mine and Edith's: mamma gave it to us to keep our treasures in!"

"Not to keep musty cake for mice to nibble, I am sure," said Mrs. Fentyman; "as if you had not too much of good thi... day, and must go hoarding! Here is y... distracted with mice, calling me to ac... t for t... ir getting up-stairs, when it is all ... ir messes in here that brought them."

"They are not messes, I ... y! that is Christma cake. If the mice have nibbl... l it a little I will cu off the outside, and make the ... set quite neat befo I put it back again."

"And what use will that be? they must be thr away, and traps put in instead, if your mamma have any peace."

"Now, Fenty, go away; I will do it all r and you are not to meddle."

"Very well, then; your mamma must settle

Mrs. Fentyman went to the drawing-room form her mistress of the cause of the nightly

bance, and that it was not the least use in the world for her to stand arguing with Master Collins, for he would have his way. On hearing this, Mrs. Collins went up to the school-room in displeasure. Charley had fetched his sister, and both the children were standing before the closet.

"What are you hiding up eatables for in your closet? Turn them all out directly! Here is the house overrun with mice through these tricks of yours. Where are they?"

"O mamma, don't meddle! I will show you," said Charley. "Just peep, and you will see."

"I will have them all turned out," said Mrs. Collins, and she rang the bell. "Martha, bring a dust-pan and brush, and clear out this rubbish from the children's closet."

"O mamma, please do let it stay! We have kept it there ever since Christmas-day; and indeed the mice haven't spoilt it at all, only just nibbled a little, which we can clear away; and you know, mamma, Miss Mansfield will be home in a week, and then we can take it to little Me and Meggie, and their poor mother. We saved it all for them; it was the largest bit that we had!"

This special pleading did not exactly meet the case in hand, though Charley and Edith, in their misty conceptions of the cause of distress, thought it quite to the point. But Martha had returned with dust-pan and brush, a far more conclusive argument. Mrs.

Collins had, however, relented under the melting and mingling appeal from both children. She put in her hand, instead of sending in the housemaid's brush; and when one little parcel came out after another, done up so neatly in white paper, with odd bits of ribbon, colored wool, or string, the nibbled paper showing the contents of each, and Edith pleaded that no other store could be like this, which they had saved up for three weeks, Mrs. Collins said, "Well, don't make any more fuss about it; put it all into a basket, and take it downstairs to the butler's pantry, and we will drive up to-morrow and leave it at the door."

This turned the trouble into rejoicing; even Mrs. Fentyman was pacified, and there was a fresh packing up, with nibbled corners cut off, and fresh stores were added from Mrs. Fentyman's now compassionate heart. Only once her displeasure rose again, when Charley, in his innocence of the real cause of disquiet, said he was going to put the nibbled crumbs back into the closet, because the poor little mice would be so disappointed when they came and found none.

Mrs. Fentyman said they should not go ba unless they went in a trap; and Charley was grea hurt, and said no trap should ever go there. M Collins was obliged again to interfere, and Ch had to give up the crumbs, in expectation o next day's promised pleasure. But no trap wen

his closet; so the poor little mice came and went in their hunger, gnawing a few leaves of some lesson-books there; but when they found no better cheer, they soon ceased to come, paying visits elsewhere; and it is thought they were at last surprised in a trap and so troubled Mrs. Collins no more.

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"O mamma, do look here! This is little Meggie! She is such a darling! the dearest little thing, — if she would but open her eyes!"

"Now, Edith, my dear, give the child to its mother, you will let it fall the next moment under the wheels!"

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glad that she aid l d to give, at the only
moment she e gi to the disabled father.
She thought of t " ere not ten cleansed,
but where are the ? tl e are not found that
returned to give gl to God save this stranger."
How swift l ; pread its glad wings
to heaven! how w hers had often been
when it v was perhaps in her
wearin fo d Mrs. Brame took
home to her ov l t sson of thanksgiving.
So passed the " Glory to God in the
highest; on earth l od-will to men."

CHAPTER II.

"I HAD mice in my room last night, Fentyman; you really must find out what brings them," Mrs. Collins said to her housekeeper. "I must have the house searched. The state of nerves in which I lay last night, expecting to see one on the curtain or pillow, has completely overset me to-day. The nibbling was something distressing; it seemed to me to be in the wall between my room and the school-room."

"The walls are good enough," replied Fentyman; "it could not be in them: but I will see to the closet in the school-room."

"Whatever it may be, you must find it out, and get rid of it before another night, or I shall be ill with broken rest!"

The housekeeper proceeded to a personal search, and, hid away in the school-room closet, she found at each far corner a little heap of such good things as mice particularly like. There was in each corner a slice of Christmas-cake, wrapped up in paper, paper and cake both nibbled round; there were also additions in the form of sweetmeats, oranges, raisins, and

almonds, — all arranged in great neatness, as if with extreme care, and the light-footed little mice had not displaced their order; they had only nibbled in every direction.

"Now, Master Collins, who put all these things here?" said Mrs. Fentyman, as the child entered the room.

"O Fenty, what are you doing? Don't touch that closet; it is mine and Edith's: mamma gave it to us to keep our treasures in!"

"Not to keep musty cake for mice to nibble, I am sure," said Mrs. Fentyman; "as if you had not too much of good things every day, and must go hoarding! Here is your mamma distracted with mice, calling me to account for their getting up-stairs, when it is all your messes in here that brought them."

"They are not messes, Fenty! that is Christmas cake. If the mice have nibbled it a little I will cut off the outside, and make the closet quite neat before I put it back again."

"And what use will that be? they must be throv away, and traps put in instead, if your mamma is have any peace."

"Now, Fenty, go away; I will do it all myse and you are not to meddle."

"Very well, then; your mamma must settle t

Mrs. Fentyman went to the drawing-room t form her mistress of the cause of the nightly di

bance, and that it was not the least use in the world for her to stand arguing with Master Collins, for he would have his way. On hearing this, Mrs. Collins went up to the school-room in displeasure. Charley had fetched his sister, and both the children were standing before the closet.

"What are you hiding up eatables for in your closet? Turn them all out directly! Here is the house overrun with mice through these tricks of yours. Where are they?"

"O mamma, don't meddle! I will show you," said Charley. "Just peep, and you will see."

"I will have them all turned out," said Mrs. Collins, and she rang the bell. "Martha, bring a dust-pan and brush, and clear out this rubbish from the children's closet."

"O mamma, please do let it stay! We have kept it there ever since Christmas-day; and indeed the mice haven't spoilt it at all, only just nibbled a little, which we can clear away; and you know, mamma, Miss Mansfield will be home in a week, and then we can take it to little Me and Meggie, and their poor mother. We saved it all for them; it was the largest bit that we had!"

This special pleading did not exactly meet the case in hand, though Charley and Edith, in their misty conceptions of the cause of distress, thought it quite to the point. But Martha had returned with dust-pan and brush, a far more conclusive argument. Mrs.

Collins had, however, relented under the melting and mingling appeal from both children. She put in her hand, instead of sending in the housemaid's brush; and when one little parcel came out after another, done up so neatly in white paper, with odd bits of ribbon, colored wool, or string, the nibbled paper showing the contents of each, and Edith pleaded that no other store could be like this, which they had saved up for three weeks, Mrs. Collins said, "Well, don't make any more fuss about it; put it all into a basket, and take it downstairs to the butler's pantry, and we will drive up to-morrow and leave it at the door."

This turned the trouble into rejoicing; even Mrs. Fentyman was pacified, and there was a fresh packing up, with nibbled corners cut off, and fresh stores were added from Mrs. Fentyman's now compassionate heart. Only once her displeasure rose again, when Charley, in his innocence of the real cause of disquiet, said he was going to put the nibbled crumbs back into the closet, because the poor little mice would be so disappointed when they came and found none.

Mrs. Fentyman said they should not go back, unless they went in a trap; and Charley was greatly hurt, and said no trap should ever go there. Mrs. Collins was obliged again to interfere, and Charley had to give up the crumbs, in expectation of the next day's promised pleasure. But no trap went into

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"Now Edith, take care; you are quite forgetting yourself. I cannot have babies in the carriage with me."

"O mamma, she is not a baby, indeed; she is quite a little girl, and will sit upon my knee. Now, give me little Meggie in here, on my lap," said Edith, smoothing her blue merino, and setting her

two feet quite firm on the carriage-floor. The poor mother obeyed, and handed in little Meggie, who opened her black eyes, and seeing Mrs. Collins sitting there before her with a rather forbidding face, between astonishment and fear, little Meggie cried.

"Now, now, don't cry," said Edith. "There, it's me, do you see? Who made you this pretty pink frock, little Meggie? See! — see!" and Edith danced the window-tassel, and the cry changed to a crow of satisfaction and pleasure.

"Do take your child!" Mrs. Collins said imploringly to the poor woman. "My daughter is not used to babies; it keeps me in terror."

The mother stretched out her arms and lifted Meggie away, who now cried to go back, at which Edith sprang out to comfort the child.

"Do find your brother; tell him I must go, Edith."

Edith went in. Mrs. Collins looked after her, and saw the happy face of her boy looking up to little Me as he sat on a low stool beside the wheel-chair, and heard him say, "You good little boy, you have not forgotten at all! Now I will give you a new lesson: four letters you shall learn. How pleased Miss Mansfield will be! Now spell after me, — C-o-a-l, coal; f-i-r-e, fire. Edith, what is this word — I-r-o-n?" "Iron," said Edith. "And what is this next — Z-i-n-c?" "I don't know," said Edith. "I don't think that Z ought to be at the

beginning; that is why I don't know it." "Dear me, we must wait for Miss Mansfield! Oh, no; I will just ask mamma. Mamma," said Charley, running to the open carriage-door, "do tell me what this word is."

"Charley, I cannot be waiting here all the day; you must come."

"Don't you know it, mamma? I did so hope you would! 'Z-i-n-c.' Edith says that Z ought not to be there."

"My dear child, it is 'zinc.' But what are you after now? I cannot wait here all day."

"Oh, no, mamma, — not all day; only just these four words. Little Me learns so fast! he does so want some more, and Miss Mansfield will be so surprised, you know. I think I can say them all, now; coal, fire, iron, zinc."

"Now Charley, my dear boy, don't you be long."

The poor woman, seeing the agitation of the lady's manner, came out and spoke of the goodness that dear young gentleman and lady had showed her, of the change in her poor boy, and the comfort in the home, until the kind feeling that lived in the heart of Mrs. Collins was kindled at length into interest and expression; and the poor woman, finding how the simple tales of her home life began to interest the lady, went on with its details, which so shortened the time, that on the next call to Charley and Edith they were ready to come.

Mrs. Collins thought again of that poor woman on her return to her home, who had brought up so large a family in such poverty, and certain useful things were ordered through Fentyman, and sent up unknown to the children, as Mrs. Collins would have dreaded the idea of such another call on the Common. But fresh clothing came for the worn-out stores of the cottage, and comfort and rest for aching limbs, and happier eyes and looks less weary, and the spring of younger years seemed returning again. And when Miss Mansfield came back there were stories to tell that were delightful to hear; and the welcome she met was only second to that of her home; and reading, work, and lessons, play, and visits to little Me, were all regular again.

Patience in her home still thought upon Benjamin Tovel and little Sue. Her motherly affections clung around the child, and the state of the blind man moved her compassion, no less than his piety won her regard and veneration. She often looked at the corner where he sat, and missed the heavenly companionship that had strengthened her faith and brightened her pathway with clearer light from above. The cottage was large, with three bedrooms above; at present she only used one, and made store-rooms of the others. There was also a good bricked room in the front, next to their lower room, — it was not ceiled nor plastered, and they used it for wood; but how easily it might be made into a room as pleas-

ant almost, though not quite so large, as their own! There the blind man might dwell, Patience thought close beside them; her time was her own, and how well she could see to the few wants he would have! He could follow his trade, and then living rent-free, with the milk of her cow for the child and for him, and a little bacon from their pigs, or an egg from their hens, which they should never miss, why, he would seem quite rich! And then there was the kind notice that would be taken of him and the children by the Lady Gertrude, and the sweet children, and the kind servants of the Hall; and her own mistress, Mrs. Smith, and Miss Rose, and Master William; and then their good Minister, too! while, in the town, no minister had ever entered their home. Patience thought on all this by day and by night, until it quite filled her mind, and she felt as if she must speak to her husband, to ease the burden of these bright possibilities of change from Ivy Lane to her cottage, with all that would follow. But Patience was a very silent woman, and she still kept her thoughts to herself for a time.

Then again they rose up before her in another light. She began to consider how Mr. Clifford had given the good place that they lived in to her husband's dear old mother, to make her latter days easy, and to be sure it did that; but how soon she was taken! and only Jem and she left in the full strength of life to live in the cottage that was given for the

sake of the aged. Not but that she knew t
Squire had that regard for her husband, that
would never be against the house being his hom
but now, if they could give a shelter to those who
need was so plain, it would seem more answerab
to the goodness that gave it. And who could l
more like unto him it was built for, than was Be
jamin Tovel? If the Squire did not know him, l
would almost be thinking they had found up anoth
Old Willy again. There was all to be said for
and what could be against it? Still Patience w
silent.

"I say, Patience girl," said her husband one da
"your thoughts are all of a heap upon something
I can see that, as clear as ever I saw the pebbles l
piled in the brook."

"I can't get that blind traveller and his child o
of mind, Jem."

"Nor any one else that ever once got in!" a
swered her husband.

"I don't know for that," said Patience; "but, yc
see, they are so lonely like out there in the gre
world, and here we be in this house, never builde
as you know, Jem, for them that could work. An
when dear Old Willy was taken up to a better hom
it was given for you to make a home for your m
Then, see how we lost her. And now we bide h
alone, not befriending of any."

"Then your mind runs on having them here?"

"Well, you know there is that room we used for our wood, as well built up of brick as a room wants to be, all on the ground-floor, and a door to hand, too. It would be just nothing but a bit of plaster and whitewash; and a little stone or a few bricks laid down on the floor, and there would be a place all complete for a home. He could follow his trade there; and you know the goodness that runs down like a river, as the saying is, in this parish, Jem, that they never could want, nor yet lie heavy on any."

"Well, if that be not a good thought, I don't know what is," answered Jem. "What, shall I speak to the Squire, and ask his leave at once? I should think he would take to it kindly. I could tell him the blind man is as like to dear Old Willy as any two men could be with a score of years odds between them.

Jem was feeding his sheep on the frosty earth the next day, when he saw the Squire riding over the downs, with little Alfred, on Snowberry, beside him. Jem turned to meet him, —

"I beg pardon, sir."

"All right," said the Squire; "we are in no great hurry to-day, and you have something to say."

"Papa," said little Alfred, "I must get down, — there is old Nep; he will fetch and carry for me, papa."

"Very well, you may have a run, only keep i sight, remember."

So little Alfred slipped off Snowberry to besto his companionship on Nep.

"Well, Jem, what business to-day?"

"'Tis my wife, sir," said Jem: "she wants t neighbor a blind man in our cottage-house, a poo traveller on the road; we harbored them two night The dog saved the child of Farmer Burton down a the Grange."

"Yes, I heard of that. We might envy you, Jem saving the life of those poor things adrift in th fog!"

"And they were worth the saving, sir; as w have reason to know, for they bided three nights un der shelter of our roof, and to my thinking non more heavenly could be: he is as like to Old Will as one star to another.

"And your wife wants to give them a home But you have no room, I fear, to spare."

"As for that, sir, it is only plaster on the walls o that bricked room where we have stowed up ou wood. I can build up a lean-to, free and easy fo that. They would live free of rent; then, like n he could follow his trade. And my wife d reckon it right down honest in us, sir, strong active as we be, to bide alone in the house you up for the old."

"As for that, Jem, if you have my free

suppose that will set you quit of all dishonest scores. But it may be all right to give shelter to others if you know those who need it, and don't put yourselves out. Only what will the parish say if you bring in helpless poor?"

"As to that, sir," said Jem, in a tone of hearty decision, "I can show them a pair of hands that never ate pauper's bread, and while they be free to labor none of mine ever shall; and if I bring in the blind man it shall be to care for him like a son."

"That must be right then, Jem, so far as I see."

"The man himself is no pauper, sir," said Jem, whom the thought had aroused; "he earns his honest bread, and is clever at his trade, and such a man to discourse with, as I should say all might consider it a blessing to the parish to have him brought in."

"Well, Jem, he seems worthy for whom you should do this. I wish you good speed. You must let us know when he comes. Your wish carries out my purpose in making that dwelling a home for the homeless. You remember that evening when you drew the tarpauling over the roof?" and the Squire smiled from his tall horse, and turned to ride after his boy. And Jem said, —

"No need for make-shifts there now, sir." And Alfred stopped his careering with Nep, sprang on his little pony, and they were soon out of sight.

Patience always had leave to take her children

up to the farm when she had occasion to go to t
town; they were great favorites with Mrs. Smith a
Rose; but it was very seldom Patience left her hor
The next day, however, she took them both the
and set out on foot for the town. The walk hard
seemed long in her eager desire. She reached I
Lane, but thought not now of her own childhc
there. She pressed on to the end, where a basl
was hanging, and saw in a moment more the bli
man at his work, with little Sue beside him, a
Sharp on the floor. Little Sue gave a cry of j
at the sight, and flew to her embrace. The bli
man raised his head in amaze; but a moment mo
and the quiet tones of that voice that welcomed h
to harbor and home from the chilling fog of t
river broke on his ear, and he took the hand tl
she gave him in both of his, and felt as if a daug
ter were come. Little Sue drew Patience to t
inner room, where a fire burned in the small gra
and Benjamin Tovel came too, and they all sat dov
there. And when the overjoyed feeling of the u
expected meeting subsided a little, then Patience tc
how Jem had arranged all to give them a hon
The blind man could not speak for some momen
so deep was his thankfulness. Then he said,—

"O my daughter, you have lightened all the
I have yet to tread! It seems like Jacob's l
reaching one end down to me, and the oth
to the mansions above. I must still bide here

while longer," he said; "but that dear home before me shows the distance in light. Little one, run to Mammy Garson; tell her who be come; she will be thankful enough, I am sure, to speak a word to you here."

"Daddy, lets we just run and tell Sammy we want him!" So little Sue ran first to Mammy Garson, then with Rachel to Sammy.

Left alone with Patience, Benjamin Tovel told her of the constant friend that the widow, even in her deepest poverty, had been to him and his child; how she had cared for little Sue like a mother, and shown him that constant care and kindness words could never express. He told Patience that the poor widow knew she was dying; he said, "It is only the kindness of the gentry at the great house in your village that has cheered her up heart and body a bit; but the time can't be long, and I could not leave her alone. She often does say she has found comfort from me, and if she should need it then, how could I be away? And the poor children, —I must see the last of them. They are too young for service, and must go to the workhouse; but I do hear that at their age they wont be bad off there, and will pick up more learning than they could get at home; for Sammy can't be beat off from the thought of earning a living for his mother. Poor child! when he does come back to her with a few pence, he is almost as great as a prince with his

crown. She will feel it less for them, if she kno I am by, for they have long been used to me nc and have young hearts full of love."

Patience could only say, —

"Let it be so, then; all shall be ready, and y will know the door stands open for you when y can come in."

Then little Sue came in triumph, leading l friends: Mammy Garson, whose pale, wan fa lighted up with a smile of such welcome and ble ing on Patience as she could never forget; Rach who looked up in love to the one who had saved l friends; and Sammy, with his broom, who said, —

"When little Sue goes to see you, may Sam come too?" And Patience said, "Yes." And l large heart opened wide, and she felt as if she co take them all in, and life be only the happier a holier for each one that stood there. On the fa of the widow she saw that shadow of death that re as a veil over the life immortal within, — the life th as the outward man decays, is renewed day by d and often throws its radiance around the gloom the grave. Patience saw this, and feared not the widow, whose departing steps were illumi with a light that she knew would shine brighter brighter to the perfect day.

When the time came to go she pressed little to her heart; the child's arms clung round her but she did not speak a word. Patience listened

longed for the uttered farewell, but the child parted in silence, with such a wistful smile on her face, that it left its impression on the heart that received it, as if graven there in its touching sweetness forever. When Patience had gone a few yards she turned to look back; there they all stood at the little shop-door. Poor Sharp had followed her a few steps. Little Sue stood with Sammy beside her; he had put one arm round her neck in consoling affection; the other held his little broom: behind stood Mammy Garson, Rachel, and the blind man, who pictured Patience's form in his darkness. And Patience left Ivy Lane.

CHAPTER III.

THE blind officer's child, whose youthful ministry of love had lightened to many the pathway of life, was herself one of those we sometimes look upon here, around whose morning of life the shadows gather thickly, yet the sun shines softly through them, like that promise in nature which makes us feel sure the after-day will be clear.

She could not remember her mother, who had departed this life soon after her birth, leaving her an infant, in India. She was born to wealth, but before she knew either the true or supposed value of money, it was no longer hers. The shock of this loss of property had greatly affected her father; she had already been sent over to England, and a few years after he followed, threatened with blindness, which soon became total. Her uncle had been the manager of her mother 's property, — her mother's only brother, — and, though it was lost through some fatal speculation, he still remained in a position of independence. Olivia was sent to his care. She found but a cold refuge for her childhood in his house; and

joyfully welcomed the return of her father, and the prospect of life, though in poverty, with him.

Olivia did not know that any particular reason led her father to fix on a lodging in the large town to which they now came. She afterwards learned it was there he first saw her mother, who was visiting near, and they never afterwards met until in India he again saw the smile that had been as a sunbeam ever resting on life's troubled waters to him. Now, broken in health, bereaved in heart, and with darkness ever attending his steps, he came with his only child to live on his pension in a quiet lodging in the old town. Olivia had early learned a personal independence, for the house of her relatives had been no indulgent home to her. And now her ready powers enabled her to learn the best economy of small means, and the comforts most needful to her father. She also won the interest of the mistress of the house where they lodged, and the good-will of the house-servant who waited on them. They had been happy in finding a lodging with those who could feel for them with the sympathy of compassionate hearts. This made life far easier to the young motherless girl, who, without this, could hardly have left her father's side; but the certainty that he would be cared for if she were away encouraged her often to take a short walk: without this her health must have given way; but this brief time of refreshment and change enabled her to bear the burden of the day;

for with all her love for her father, and that love wa devoted, the day brought its burden of toil and c care.

Her father, in his blindness, leaned in helpless d pendence on his child: he saw not how young th face was that was constantly beaming on his, an rather judged his child's powers by her mental d velopment, which was naturally beyond her year and matured by the necessities of daily life in whic circumstances placed her. The weight that reste on her was heavy for the elastic spring of so your a life to bear, the more so as her best efforts ofte seemed to fail, and a sad irritation, or dejected s lence in her father, could hardly be beguiled into r pose or interest. Yet the spirit within that darkene dwelling of the body was brighter and more vigo ous than its outward life could testify. Its energ was often consumed in the one single effort of en during the sense of pain, and the weary restlessnes of nerve that could not quiet itself, and had n power to yield to the soothing efforts of his chil Could he have said as much as this, it would hav made her work easier; but at the point where sel command fails, the power of expressing that sens of failure is often gone too; yet an effort to retai the power of expression may prove a great aid t those who suffer, and not less so to those who tend on them. Her father, in his state of su ing and earthly privation, ceased not the conflict

self; but the struggle was unseen by outward observation. Often when to that Eye that looketh on the heart the victory was won, to all others he still seemed to fail, and silence became his constant resource.

Olivia held on like a bright streamlet, that flowep in the midst of his life's darkened current, itself never dim, but pouring for him its first freshness of thought and feeling. And it was as the very balm of life to him; and often in freer moments his soul overflowed with thankfulness for the treasure left to brighten the dark world.

In her lonely walks she had soon discovered the blind basket-maker and little Sue; attracted at first by his privation resembling her father's, she ventured into his shop to talk with him and the child. Little Sue appeared to her the sweetest child she had ever seen. She looked like one fair blossom left alone, where all had withered beside; or like one little bird, from the firmament of heaven, making its nest and pouring its song on the tree that the lightning had scathed. She knew not how little Sue resembled herself, who, in years a little older, fulfilled the same mission of love. And when, in visits often repeated, she became better acquainted with Benjamin Tovel, she found in him the very power that more acute suffering had denied to her blind father, — the free power of expression; not in words only, but in the serenity that beamed from his spirit on his sightless face. No

other friend could then have been to her the frie
he became. He seemed able to understand eve
difficulty, solve every question, and shed a cheeri
light on each doubt that perplexed her youth
mind. She always returned from her visits to t
blind basket-maker and little Sue lightened, streng
ened, and cheered in her own life of ministering lo

These visits were the more frequent because, alc
as she was, she shrank from walking far, and dislik
the town; so she would the oftener turn by a sh
path to Ivy Lane, and spend a brief half-hour
companionship with the blind basket-maker and
child, seated in his little shop, while his busy fing
plied the willows; or teaching little Sue to read
to work. To the blind man and his child these vi
yielded as much as Olivia received herself fr
them. He felt the refined pleasure of converse w
a mind elevated and enriched in thought and feel
as Olivia's; the power of leading her on in th
best hopes, ever brightening, whatever else n
darken or decay; and the help to his child wh
he could not give. Even the rich tones of her vc
soothed the blind man like music; and poor Sh
shared, not without reason, in the attachment t
formed.

It was from Benjamin Tovel that Olivia heard
the illness of the poor man named Garson, who li
in the Lane. She then went to visit him, and
came to him a messenger of blessing in his li

lingering decline. In these visits she became in some degree acquainted with others; and the more so because her feeling was strong of not appearing unmindful of any. This feeling had prompted her to speak in friendly inquiry to Mrs. Brame, which led to the sad tragedy of Smut in the chimney. All the trouble for Olivia which followed formed a part of the trial, disappointment, and discipline, that often attend upon self-denying efforts for others, purifying the motives, and leading the mind to rest satisfied in the approval of Him who has said, "The desire of a man is his kindness."

Yet Olivia knew not this result at the time; she thought upon her single forgetfulness of poor Sharp on that day; that he too should have followed her, which he never did before; and wondered why it was that so much trouble and grief should have been suffered to follow from her once neglecting an act of kindness, that, but for her thoughtful care, would never have been expected or missed. But when Smut proved the occasion of Widow Garson's deliverance by Mrs. Brame, Olivia felt all her former trouble changed into joy, and thought she could never be daunted by difficulties or disappointments again. The daily life of each one who walks by faith, unfolds events such as this, consequences most important and enduring that lay hid in some birth-place as obscure, or act as insignificant as any we could relate. Nor can we wonder at this, when the page of Holy

Scripture reveals to our sight that the pr
of that nation of whom the world's Rede
to be born, turned on the fact recorded in t
words, "On that night could not the king sl
is of the same divine Providence the royal
sings when he says, "Whoso is wise, and
serve these things, even they shall under
loving-kindness of the Lord." Of the sam
apostle appeals to those to whom he writes
says, "Ye have seen the end of the Lord,
Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."
same our own poet writes when he says,

> "The bud may have a bitter taste,
> But sweet will be the flower."

Olivia now thought no more trouble wa
behalf of poor Smut. The sweetest balm
fort in the deliverance to Widow Garson ha
and far more than healed, all the grief in h
She now only thought of Mrs. Brame as of
to shed blessing, and trusted that she had
her part in the long past, and now happily cc
disaster of the cat. But that disaster hac
a step in a new life to Mrs. Brame. When,
in feeling by little Alfred's appeal, she ha
in the nursery the tale of poor Smut, her cc
reproved her, and she felt the reproof.
reproof does that faithful witness within giv
falls unheeded. It is only so far as our inwa

is softened and renewed that its warning is felt. Mrs. Brame had, indeed, forgiven what before she had resented as a wrong; the burden was now her own accusing conscience for the displeasure she had felt, and the unkindness she had shown. Often, in wakeful hours of the night, the sweet, pleading face of that young girl rose before her in remembrance; she could see as clearly, as if then before her, the tortoise-shell kitten on her arm, in its little red-leather collar, the look of entreaty she gave, as bent on repairing the wrong, and the tears in her eyes when she turned repulsed from the door. What relief Mrs. Brame would have felt if she could but have blotted out that one act of her life! Yet there, no doubt, were many as really hard as that, only the light fell not then on them, and therefore she felt them not.

We must remember that our whole life is pictured in colors that cannot fade, for they are not exposed to the atmosphere of earth, but are drawn with an invisible hand on the pages of conscience, which that hand opens at will. It is as in secret and silence page by page of this record is opened before us, that we learn to say, "I have sinned." And it is not now "An enemy's hand that hath done this," but that blessed and eternal Spirit, whose first work of divine renewal is to convince of sin, that then he may point us to him, "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Let us never forget that there is

a world where the record of conscience lies always open, and the burning light of truth kindles the colors of each scene, and the eye must rest upon them in vain remorse and despair. It has been said, that over the portals of that world is written, —

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

Let us then not shun the personal inquiry now, nor imagine that sins we have lost sight of will never reappear, but rather earnestly ask the light of truth to recall to us the past, while it is written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The hard frosts of the new year had broken up suddenly in February, and at its close damp weather and fever prevailed. The Doctor who attended at the Hall, and kept a friendly watch to give all needful alarms, reported the prevalence of fever in the town. There was no case of fever in Ivy Lane, and Mrs. Brame was sent in alone as the bearer of some additional aid, that by increased nourishment Widow Garson and her children might be less liable to the fatal fever. Mrs. Brame found Widow Garson looking sadly distressed, and almost unable to cheer up at the tokens of care for their welfare brought by her, though she did give a smile of pleasure over two little parcels, which had been done up by Constance and Alfred for Rachel and Sammy.

"Have you any fresh trouble?" Mrs. Brame at

length asked, being more observant now of the expression of the face than she once would have been.

Widow Garson replied, "Captain Campbell has the fever, and he is weakly at best; but I am most afraid for the dear young lady, for she is his nurse."

Mrs. Brame heard the widow in silence; not the silence of indifference, far from it: she was sitting quietly there; no outward emotion marked what was passing within, but she felt a deeper pang than when Smut disappeared. Hearing no reply from Mrs. Brame, and yet perceiving the look of concern on her face, the widow took courage, and putting her hand in her pocket drew from it a note saying, "This came to me this morning. I had wondered that she had not been here; she was not used to be absent so long. I had a misgiving, and lost many a look for her, fearing something was wrong."

Mrs. Brame took the letter, drew her spectacle-case from her pocket, laid the case on the table, rubbed up both glasses, and put them on. Mrs. Brame then read the note, and Widow Garson looked anxiously on the strong, settled countenance, as those words, so dear to her, were silently read. The note was as follows: —

"My dear Friend: — You must not be troubled at what I have to tell you. My dear father is ill. He has taken the ever, and it has pulled down his strength so quickly that the doctor fears for him;

but we know in whose hands our life is. He w
not have a nurse; he says he knows well what th
are. He thinks it would ruin him, and cost all
has. I wish he would consent, for I think the
would then be more hope. I sleep on a little b
by his side, and the people here are so good th
always want me to lie down in the afternoon, whi
they wait upon him; but I am too anxious to re
You shall soon hear again, but be sure you do
come; you will double all my care if you do. It
not you alone, but Rachel and Sammy, and litt
Sue, and all of you, I think of. It is my best earth
comfort to think of you all, and if the fever got in
Ivy Lane we cannot tell who might not die! Troub
came to you, and you were delivered; now you mu
trust for me, and deliverance will come. My de
father is as gentle and patient as a little child: it
wonderful to see him, and the greatest comfort to n
to do all I can.

"Yours, in trouble, but in hope,
"OLIVIA CAMPBELL."

"He will die," said Mrs. Brame, calmly, as s
folded up the letter and laid it on the table, "and t
poor child must take it: no hope for her escape, nu
ing him so!"

A groan from the widow arrested Mrs. Brame
calm calculations. They were not the calculatio
of her heart, but the cool judgment of one used

sickness, and accustomed from the first to predict the event. But the widow, — her heart seemed bound up in the young life, from whose expressive lips she first learned that "God is love;" and under whose simple reading of Holy Scripture she had seen the faith and hope of her dying husband brighten, until the valley of shadows had no gloom for him. That piteous cry recalled Mrs. Brame from professional calculations to the feeling of interest, not less real though less poignant, within her own breast. She rose hastily, put her spectacles in their case, and returned them to her pocket, saying, as if in deep deliberation, "Something must be done, and that before night closes in!"

The widow looked at her in silence. That appealing look Mrs. Brame had seen once before on the face of the widow, when the step of the bailiff was heard on the stair; it was directed then only to Heaven, for hope on earth she had none. Now she felt Mrs. Brame had brought deliverance to her, and what might she not do in this freshly risen woe!

Mrs. Brame had soon retaken her seat in the dog-cart in which she had been driven in that day. The wheels sped swiftly along; no need in this vehicle for walking up hill. She was soon at the door; then within, seeking the Lady Gertrude, whom she found in her morning-room. Mrs. Brame had considered all things in her homeward drive, reflected, weighed, and decided; and now her hurried step, a flush on

her cheek, and a look of disquiet in her eye, aw
ened Lady Gertrude's concern, seeing her movec
in bonnet and shawl.

"Is the poor widow worse?" inquired that vc
full of tender solicitude.

Mrs. Brame answered "No;" but she could
say more; a conflict of feeling overcame her
possession. In her drive home she had though
the young girl whose best feelings she had wron
What if she took the fever and died? Then
in such haste of necessity, to make the Lady
trude know who she was? how to tell, in such a
ment, the tale of the past? And then the tone
that voice, breathing the very soul of compas
quite overcame her, and her only explanation
an outburst of feeling. Lady Gertrude turned
her writing-table and made Brame sit beside
saying, "Wait a little; you will be able to tell m
presently."

"I am sure I am ashamed of my weakness,"
Mrs. Brame; "but there is a dear young thing in
town whom I have long had lying heavy on my m
for I once wronged her feelings: her father is bl
he has taken the fever, and is sure to sink unde
— a weakly man at best; and the poor child
take it, for she is his nurse."

"Cannot a nurse be found for him?" Lady
trude asked.

'Yes, but he will not consent; he says a n

would ruin him. He is poor, they say, — an officer, — and went blind in India."

"If a nurse were sent as from a friend, would he be likely to consent then?"

"No," said Mrs. Brame; "it is the waste that belongs to them; they may do their work well, but there are so few that will spare the reckoning that must come at the end."

"Do you want to go?" asked that heart of quick understanding.

"Yes, I do. I feel now as if I would not lose the opportunity for healing up the wrong I once did her, — no, not if it cost me my life. It is not much use I am here. Mercy would do all I do, and more too; but I can nurse night and day. It would be saving the poor child, — I feel sure of that; and I would keep away until all danger was past."

"You shall go; and I know the desire of your heart will be granted, and you will be given back to us in safety again. When do you wish to go?"

"The sooner the better," Brame replied. "I can be ready in half-an-hour."

"Not quite so soon; you must promise me you will dine before you go. Take with you supplies of all that may be wanted, and while you are there order anything that may help to save life or ease suffering. What is the address?"

"That reminds me," said Brame, "I never noted the address. I must go by Ivy Lane and inquire.

How strange, to be sure! I never did such a sen
less thing in my life! Well, it will comfort up t
poor widow to know I shall be there."

Lady Gertrude's sweetest smile beamed on her c
nurse. "The address will be easily learned," s
said, "and it is well sometimes to have our hea
more awake than our head. Go in hope; it is t
pathway of blessing; and it will be surely said to yc
'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least
these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. BRAME packed up her wardrobe for nursing, — all washing garments; stuffs and black silks were left behind. The butler packed port wine; and the housekeeper, the dear old Scotch Mackenzie, aunt by marriage to Rose, gathered largely all supplies that she thought might be wanted by the sick or the nurses; for she said, "'Tis worth the best thoughts of one to keep the nurses up bonny. And drop me a line when ye are wanting more. . . . No, ye need not be after writing; I can guess pretty near, and will send in the store." So Mrs. Brame was started, with John the groom to drive her, with a fresh horse, to the town. All in the house had gathered, in one way or other, the intelligence that Brame was going to nurse the fever, and they came from all quarters to wish her good-by; and watched her departing with that unexpressed feeling of hope and desire which breathes from the spirit as prayer, and brings an answer of blessing.

"Mamma, Brame is gone to nurse that young lady with the kitten; wont she be surprised when she sees how kind Brame is grown?"

"Hush, Consy! you must not speak disrespe
of Brame. She has a dear, noble heart, and
see it now."

"Why did we not see it before, mamma?"

"Because there was not the same occasion
it out. I don't know any one else who would
as Brame has done, to nurse strangers for syn
in such a fever."

"Would not you, mamma?"

"I could not Consy; because I could not
papa and you to infection."

"Do you think Brame will see the tortois
kitten that had the little red collar on, mamma

"It cannot be a kitten now, Consy; and w
all think of the dear child who is nursing he
father."

"Will she be glad to see Brame, mamma?"

"I am sure Brame will make every one fe
comfort of her presence before she has been th
hour."

"Must we wait until Brame comes home
we hear all about it, mamma?"

"It will be a long time before you see
again; but I hope she will write to us som
and then you will hear."

Mrs. Brame alighted at the top of Ivy L
walked to Widow Garson's. There she lea
address, and astonished Widow Garson by
"I am now on my way to nurse them my
make yourself easy that the best will be done."

Mrs. Brame delayed not a moment; but, with the thoughtful care of one acquainted with the infection of certain fevers, she would not let the groom drive her to the door, but took a fly from an inn in the town, and gave orders to John, that whatever parcels were sent in to her were to be left at that inn, as persons fresh from pure country air were more liable to infection than those who lived in the town where the sickness prevailed.

Arrived at the door, it was opened by a young woman with an anxious face.

"Can I see your mistress?"

"Yes, ma'am, I believe so; but do you know the fever is in the house?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Brame; "but you did right to name it."

Mrs. Brame was shown into a neat parlor down stairs, and the mistress of the house soon came in, looking pale and fatigued.

"I am a stranger to you," said Mrs. Brame, "but I am come to assist as a friend in nursing Captain Campbell; for I understand that he objects to having a nurse."

"It will be a blessing, indeed," said the mistress, "for we are under the constant fear that Miss Campbell will sicken: she is worn out, and takes nothing. Shall I let her know you are come? She is now in the sick-room."

"Let me bring in my parcels first," said Mrs.

Brame; so they returned to the door. A
on labels attached to the hampers, Mrs. Lis
mistress) read "H. Clifford, Esq.," her re
the stranger and sense of relief at her com
to its height. Mrs. Brame quickly unpa
store of provisions, arranged them in the cool
to be found, took out some port wine, laid d
bonnet and shawl, and, tying on a white ap
"Now take me to Miss Campbell's sittin
Mrs. Lisson obeyed, and, leaving her the
ened to the room where Olivia was watch
calling her aside said, "You are wanted i
ting-room; and I do believe it is the hou
herself come from Squire Clifford's, at t
She has brought no end of good things, a
she is come to nurse Captain Campbell."

Mrs. Lisson, in her unbounded comfort, c
resist telling all to Olivia, not considering
sudden tidings might almost disable her, in h
unnerved state, for the interview to which
called her.

Olivia, filled with surprise, entered the ro
looked a moment in silence on the strang
stood there in cotton gown and white apr
all the substantial and comfortable appeara
nurse. But softened as the expression of
was, Olivia remembered it. Mrs. Brame, to
on Olivia, who had passed from childhood t
and now wore the charm of that first consciou

that comes not until womanhood is expanding the life. Yet the sweet face was the same, though worn with long watches, and its expression full of trust and deep feeling. A flush now passed over her cheek, and giving her hand in greeting she said, —

"Oh, Mrs. Brame, is it you?"

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Brame, who looked now in tender compassion on the young life she had come to save, "Yes, my dear; who else should it be? How often I have vexed for the unkindness I showed you! But I trust to prove to you now that Nurse Brame has a heart, and is learning in her old days what she might have known in her young time. I am come from my Lady at the Hall to help you nurse your father."

The surprise, the sudden joy at the never-forgotten trouble again springing up into comfort like this, overpowered the weakened frame and exhausted powers of the young girl, and she sat down for support, unable to speak. A moment more, and Nurse Brame had raised her in her firm arms, laid her down on the couch with a cushion under her head, and covered her feet warmly, saying, "Lie still; I am going to fetch you something I have, that it is right you should take." This was said lest Olivia should imagine that Mrs. Brame had gone to her father. She soon returned with eau de Cologne, port wine, and biscuits; first bathed Olivia's burning temples, and then made her drink wine, saying,

"You must not sip the wine, but drink it like wa
and it will not affect your head. Now lie quite
until I speak to you again."

Olivia felt the necessity and the blessing of
voice of authority, and yielded herself to its pow
Mrs. Brame opened the more distant window, th
seating herself on the couch, rubbed the tired lir
of the weary girl as if she knew how they ach
and Olivia felt the first sense of rest that had com
her since the fever had seized on her father. T
revived, after a while she opened her eyes and smi
on Mrs. Brame, who said, "There, you are bet
now; but you must eat these two biscuits before
lift up your head." So the biscuits were eaten.

"Now," said Mrs. Brame, "before you get up
can talk over a little of what is best to be done."

"I am afraid," said Olivia, "papa is so weak
we can never make him understand your good
and he will vex himself and refuse the help."

"You can call me Letty Dawson," said
Brame, "if Captain Campbell asks who I a
my maiden name was Letitia Dawson; in his
state it is better not to raise up remembrance.
say I am one of the household at Squire Cl
used to nursing, and come in as a friend,
help."

Olivia still hesitated, though she had rise
— delayed in the suspense of fear.

"Now, don't question with fear," said Mrs.

"the right thing can always be done. There is One above makes a way where we cannot. I shall wait at the door: you say what I have told you, — then I will follow directly. And you come and lie down here, well covered up, and trust for the rest."

Olivia tremblingly obeyed. She found her father moaning, as he had done all day, in weary restlessness. She said all as she was desired, and Mrs. Brame then entered at once.

"I am sorry for your illness, sir, and hope I may have the pleasure and comfort of being some help, for I am used to nursing. I see you are restless, but I think we may soon get the better of that."

"Do you think you can?" said the sick man, weary with tossing, and cheered by the kind, assuring voice.

"Yes, I hope in ten minutes we shall have you asleep."

Olivia was lingering in joyful surprise. Mrs. Brame stepped to the door and said, "We are all right. Ask the mistress, or the servant, to come to me for a few minutes at once, and you rest on the sofa. Shut the window and try to sleep."

"We must make the bed freshly up," said Mrs. Brame to the mistress, who had quickly come up. "Will you wait while I fetch up some soft calico sheets I brought with me? Indian people prefer those, I am told."

Mrs. Brame then laid the sick man in a blanket on

a couch, covering him up completely; threw open the window, took down the bed-curtains, and with a towel in her still active arms beat all the close air from the bed and around it: then making up the bed, laid him in, gave him port wine of good quality, such as he had not had before, placed the pillows just supporting the shoulders as well as the head, closed the windows, and sat down to watch him. He breathed in refreshment, his strength reviving, and he slept. The sleep lasted on, and Olivia came in. Mrs. Brame made her sit in the arm-chair, with her feet in another; put the bell within reach of her hand bade her ring if anything were wanted, then left her to watch.

Going downstairs she carried the cheering report; told the mistress of the house she was come for her tea, and proposed to have it with her; put some of the pleasant food she had brought on the table, and made the poor, tired-looking servant take some for her own meal. They all sat down in such quiet as had not been for days, still wondering at the blessing that seemed to have dropped from above. Then inquiring whether Miss Campbell had dined, and finding she had taken no dinner that day, nor any hardly for days, Mrs. Brame said, "Help me set the table." Mrs. Brame allowed but little to go up, — one wing she cut from a cold fowl she had brought, made one thin round of dry toast, cut a little plate of bread and butter, made the tea, and left the cheerful kettle on the sitting-room fire, before which a

very handsome tortoise-shell cat sat contentedly purring. Mrs. Brame stroked the cat with a quiet sigh; but it was a sigh more of thankfulness than regret. And leaving all looking inviting she returned to the sick-room.

Olivia was kneeling by the bed, and Mrs. Brame heard the low voice of the sick man say, "O my child, that sleep, how refreshing! It says, does it not, 'He giveth his beloved sleep?' 'His beloved!' What other words are there that speak of 'His beloved?' That sleep I have had, brings back a little power to think!"

Olivia gently repeated, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him, and the Lord shall cover him all the day long."

"May that best blessing be yours, my child? What more?"

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

"That is enough," he said. "There we may rest, in Jesus Christ, in God's beloved, in whom he is well pleased with us: a rest in life, a rest in death! Will that good friend come back again?"

"Yes: she is here, — she will not leave us."

"Then I will sleep. My child, good-night."

He slept, and Olivia was persuaded to hasten to her tea, persuaded to eat. Who could deny the wish of such a friend?

"But who will take care of you?" said Olivia to Mrs. Brame.

"Old nurses understand how to take care of themselves," she replied. "I have had a good tea, and you are never to think about me."

"Only in blessing!" answered Olivia. And Mrs. Brame met the sweet smile that told more than words could convey.

The Doctor came in the evening, and the mistress of the house hastened to tell of the arrival from the Hall.

"I think," said Mrs. Lisson, "she must be the housekeeper herself. She is certainly some considerable person: she has brought stores of good things; and the care she takes of one and all is quite uplifting, I am sure."

"Then Captain Campbell must be a friend of Mr. Clifford's," said the Doctor.

"I don't know about that," said Mrs. Lisson, "but I always did consider they must belong to a higher place than this; there was that pleasantness about them."

The Doctor went up to the room; he felt the change before he saw it in the restful looks of his patient. He spoke to Mrs. Brame with the courtesy of his profession, then turned to his patient, saying, "I think you look a little better this evening."

"Yes, I have slept a long, quiet sleep; a kind

friend has been here who understands all that sick people want."

"Well, that is the best thing that could have happened," said the Doctor. "Have you taken the wine I ordered?"

But it was no use to question further; the sufferer lay silent, and Mrs. Brame gave the report. She left the room with the Doctor, and then, in a congratulatory tone, he said to her, "You have done what no one else could have done for you, — made your own way in here! Too late to save the father; but it may save the daughter: there is no escape for her, — the fever is on her. Her devotion to her father for years has been wonderful in one so young; but this illness has been beyond her powers. If I had known they had friends I would have written, for they seem to have no relations who take any interest about them, and my fear has been her sinking too. Perhaps you can get Miss Campbell to rest in another chamber to-night."

Mrs. Brame heard in silence. She felt what that child's nursing had been, and now that it could not be long, she feared the evil of separating her from her father would be greater than any good that could result. So she let Olivia have her own little bed in the chamber of sickness, and watched herself through the long hours of night.

So it was for a little while, day and night; but only a little while; the strength of nature was spent; the

darkened prison-house of [illegible] must soon release its captive, and the emanci[illegible]pirit exult in celestial existence. Once after lo[illegible]mber he revived and felt his child's hand in his, and said, "Olivia, my child!" She answered, "My father!" and he replied, "A father of the fatherl[illegible]ss is God in his holy habitation." She said, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty;" he murmured, "Amen." His hand relaxed its tender grasp; he spoke not again. Mrs. Brame took her seat in the easy-chair, supporting Olivia, who knelt by the bed. All was silence awhile, then Mrs. Brame said, "To depart and be with Christ is far better, and he is gone." The orphan laid her head on the bosom of Nurse Brame, and her tears burst forth unrestrained.

Mrs. Brame was right; the fever was on Olivia, and weeks of severe illness followed. But life revived again under that maternal nursing, aided by all the remedies that skill and experience could devise. Her first words were, "My father?"

"In heaven," Mrs. Brame gently answered.

"How long?" asked Olivia.

"I followed as mourner," said Mrs. Brame, understanding her thought, "and all was done as was right it should be for a gentleman, and such respect showed as could be, not knowing his friends."

"He had none but you," said Olivia.

Mrs. Brame was deeply touched. Here again there was a trouble she had been sent to [illegible]elieve,—

she who had but so lately desired the service of love; and the words of heavenly consolation glanced through her mind, "There are last that shall be first;" but she feared to think upon them, lest she should not understand them aright, and pride and self in a new form rise up within.

As Olivia by degrees recovered strength, Mrs. Brame learned their history, freely told in confiding gratitude and love by Olivia. When Mrs. Brame found that they had a rich relation, she thought it right that he should be informed of Olivia's present condition, and Mrs. Bramer wrote to him herself, not considering it well for Olivia to make the effort in her still weakened state. The rich relation replied, expressing regret, and enclosing a ten-pound note, saying he should not be able to do anything more. In years past Mrs. Brame would have felt indignation and resentment at this, had it occurred in any case awakening her interest; but she had now discovered the hidden evil of her own heart, and felt how varied may be the forms of that same pride and hardness of heart which we may be indulging in ourselves while condemning in others. She read the note and gave it to Olivia, saying, "We must see the providence of God in what is denied no less than in what is given; if he shuts up one door, we may be quite sure it is only his way of constraining us to go in at another, which, in his own good time, he will open for us." But Olivia was greatly dis-

tressed. "It is not for the future," she said, "that fear; I can trust for myself. But there must l heavy debts, since this illness began, and the thoug of their resting on my dear father's memory is a ony. Do let me write to my uncle; he surely wi have compassion and clear those. We never had debt before, but these no one could avoid."

"My dear child,' said Mrs. Brame, "you are n left friendless in the world; you have not a debt c you, so far as I know, and if there be any unknow to me, there is plenty to clear them. What cou heal the grief I feel for my close heart and hai through a long, selfish life, like the finding it has s been stored up for you? You need give me t thanks; life is nearly over with me. I have noi to need what I have, and the blessing in my old a of not living in vain, but easing the rough way one over whom life is opening, turns my than due to Him who grants it; and you must recei it, because it stands appointed so in the good pro dence of God."

And could Olivia repay such kindness? Yes, abu dantly, in the filial affection of her own young, tru ing life. She had never met maternal tenderne but the true instincts of her nature led her to kn and yield to it now in the love of Mrs. Brame. S opened her life freely before Mrs. Brame's warml kindled interest, felt no reserve, held back nothing silence. This perfect, child-like trust responded

Mrs. Brame at the moment when all her sympathies were open to receive it; those sympathies surrounded the orphaned girl, whose young affections twined around them as the fragrant creeper blooms about the trellis whose strength is extended for its support. Olivia had one sweet memory of aged affection. On her first arrival at her uncle's, her grandmother was living, and she poured out her tenderness on the little stranger child; but she was soon taken from earth, and her love only a memory. Olivia recalled it now in fresh recollection, and always called Mrs. Brame by the endearing name of "Granny." This pleased the sheltering heart of Mrs. Brame, who watched over Olivia, not with the despotism she had formerly exercised, but with the authority of experience and love.

When Olivia was well enough they went to the sea. The parting was sorrowful from the rooms of long and dear association with her father; even all that had been painful was sacred to her now: but Olivia did not indulge in grief. She felt vividly the release the tried spirit must experience; the emancipation from the darkness, pain, and weariness of years, to the invigoration and light of immortality. Her unselfish love rose on the wing, and followed the departed, and rejoiced in his blissful rest; and when she turned to earth, a sheltering tenderness was waiting there to guard her orphaned life and supply all its need. Mrs. Brame had made kind compensation

to those in the house, but Olivia bestowed little gi
in remembrance, — things that had been added l
her to make the rooms more complete in comfort f
her father. A few of the most treasured were l
in store for herself, and Mrs. Brame said she mu
now ask for the tortoise-shell cat, and have it kept f
herself until he returned to the Hall. But when s
spoke of return to the Hall, her heart misgave he
for the feeling rose, how could she ever part fro
the sight of this young life hers had opened to sh
ter! Olivia could not see her friends of Ivy Lan
for fear of lingering infection; but they were hap
about her, and she happy for them. And she cou
talk of them freely, as of all other things, to th
compassionate nurse, who had now become her gua
dian. Sharp, though not seen since the day that l
ventured unawares into her door, now shared in Mr
Brame's respect and regard; and little Sue and t
blind basket-maker were adopted as friends.

The weeks at the sea glided peacefully on. Oliv
yielded herself to the soothing influence of natur
as she had done to the care of Mrs. Brame. G
has gifted nature with a power to soothe, strengthe
and charm the spirit most bowed down by sorro
if that spirit will yield to its influence. Oliv
found invigoration of body and mind. She had be
accustomed, in constant life with her father, to po
out her freshness of thought and feeling for hi
silent himself, silence oppressed him in her: in th

way she was trained in ready expression. This expression flowed around Mrs. Brame, who felt herself in a new world of thoughts, and feelings, and ideas. Olivia was so childlike that her thoughts gushed out clear, and though Mrs. Brame often looked at her in silence through her large glasses set in tortoise-shell, yet she understood what she meant, and often thought on what she said. Olivia would sing to her as they sat on the shore the hymns and melodies that most pleased her father. Mrs. Brame was not musical; but she loved to hear Olivia sing, read, or speak, on whatever the passing interest might be. For we are all so far gifted with power, if possessed of ordinary ability, that, whatever we take an interest in, we can in some degree understand and appreciate. Our total ignorance is the result of our total indifference. Whatever Olivia did, or thought, or felt, Mrs. Brame was responsively ready to care for; and, in consequence of this, there was an expansion of mind, no less than of heart, in the elder life that guarded the younger; while Olivia was always turning to reflect her own rainbow hues on the maternal friend at her side. Mrs. Brame's eye caught now the sparkling lights on the sea, the soft tints of the clouds, the evening position of stars, as they sat in the darkness and looked from their uncurtained window on the moon-lighted ocean. The forms of shells, sea-weed, and pebbles, with thoughts woven between, all came untaught and unlearned to Mrs.

Brame, who caught knowledge by sympathy. But when she saw Olivia draw, and produce a lovely resemblance to sunset at sea, or sunrise, with vessels near or distant, and little boats on the shore, and all this produced with a tiny pallet, and a few broken bits of paints, and a little paper and pencil, Mrs. Brame said, "This will never do! you must have a proper box, such as I have seen ladies use who could draw nothing like you;" and Olivia laughed, and kissed the solemn face, that looked as if doubtful whether it could be even allowed her to color with no show of materials, and said, "If I had a grand paint-box it might spoil my small skill; if my drawing pleases you, you must let me keep on my old way!" Mrs. Brame on consideration consented, for she felt it completed the wonder. And Olivia said, "I have heard my mother's drawings were lovely, but she gave them freely away to those who longed for them, not knowing how soon her power must be laid by for higher uses in heaven; so I have never seen one; but I love to draw because she did, and it is a pleasure that grows by use; but I have not drawn for long, as my dear father felt sad at not seeing what I did; music pleased and soothed him best."

"Who taught you, then?" inquired Mrs. Brame.

"I had lessons at my uncle's when I was a child, and our master encouraged me; but my aunt did not like my style; she said it was 'too free-and-easy,

wanted more study and art,' and want of practice must hinder that."

At length a letter came from Lady Gertrude, saying all fear of infection must be over now, and inviting Miss Campbell to return with Mrs. Brame for a visit to the Hall. Mrs. Brame put on her spectacles, and read and re-read the dear inviting words over and over again. Olivia could not fear to accept it. Mrs. Brame failed not to tell her that she must take her place as a lady in the house, and not think upon longer companionship with her. And when Olivia felt she could be near her friend, and not with her, Mrs. Brame, by help of explanation and persuasion, showed her the plain necessity for this, and promised to be often with her in her own room, and still to take care of her as her charge, which she never meant to give up.

Olivia expressed to Mrs. Brame the hope that it might help her in hearing of some engagement as a governess, which might not require experience and older years than her own. This Mrs. Brame heard in silence. So they went. And the Lady Gertrude received the orphan girl with a tenderness that made her heart glow in grateful feeling; for there was in Olivia that refined, retiring grace, that made it easy to draw her near without fear of intrusion. She bore, too, in her aspect the stamp of a nature fitted to adorn and enrich any home she might enter. Never present when best absent, never absent when wanted,

she possessed the true instinct that makes its own way at will. And wherever any shadow rested, any gloom or depression, she had sunshine to shed which touched its objects so lightly that it kindled their cheer unconsciously. Mrs. Brame never ceased her solicitude, anticipating all wants, and more than supplying all the orphan could need. But when Olivia pressed the subject of some employment again, Mrs. Brame named the wish to Lady Gertrude, who spoke herself to Olivia, saying, if happy with them she must, at least for the present, make their house her home; she could, if wishing to be useful, help her with the children, who were ready for more instruction than she herself could always give. And Mrs. Clifford, now about to lose her faithful and attached maid, would be delighted with companionship such as Olivia's; and an allowance should be supplied that would make all feel at ease. This was joy to Olivia, whose youthful spirit was awaking to all the freshness of life's morning, a morning now without clouds; and it gave no less pleasure and satisfactio to all. While from Mercy it lifted the only burde she bore of care for her mistress; for no one cou see Miss Campbell devote herself to Mrs. Cliffo though only, at present, now and then for an ho without the certain assurance that power lay in t young heart to cheer, warm, and brighten the lif which it lent its own.

Soon after Mrs. Brame's return home Consta

had whispered, "Did you see the little tortoise-shell kitten with the little red collar on?" and Mrs. Brame had replied, "My dear, it is as handsome a cat as ever walked on four feet, and it is coming home here when all fear of the fever is over!" This fear was over now, and Olivia paid a visit to Ivy Lane. She hastened to her friends, rejoicing their hearts. While she was alone in Ivy Lane, Mrs. Brame stepped into the town, and bought at a saddler's the prettiest little red collar, just the size and quality for a large, handsome cat. When Olivia returned to her at the lodgings, she saw the tortoise-shell cat, looking full of consequence and conceit, in a red collar and padlock, and she remembered the pains she had taken on that eventful day, long ago, to stitch neatly the strip of red leather, of which she had made the little kitten a collar, that it might look more attractive to the eyes of Mrs. Brame. This little act of effacing tenderness filled Olivia's eyes with the tears of grateful affection, as once before they had filled with the disappointment of hope. She kneeled at Mrs. Brame's knee, and, looking up in her face, said, "My own dearest Granny! did you remember that it had one?" Mrs. Brame said, "Yes, I could only have it complete!" And the handsome tortoise-shell cat held up his head and shut up his eyes with a look of perfect self-satisfaction; and when, amongst the treasures, the tortoise-shell cat reached the Hall, and Constance saw it, as large as life, in

a red collar before her, she knew then it m
the very same kitten she had thought of so lor
she danced round it in glee. Mrs. Brame en
it to her especial care, and she established i
room now called the school-room, as a cat
be feared in the nursery, on account of the t
mice; and Constance at length was content.

CHAPTER V.

EASTER fell in April, "sowing her lilies o'er the land;" gleams from sunny skies, on tender foliage of transparent green, with life rejoicing all around. A ray of resurrection glory, beaming from Him in whom all nature lives, wakening each varied form of beauty. That resurrection ray rested upon the tombs and graves of grassy sod; it rested on them, but as yet it might not enter there. The hour was not yet, "when all who are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth."

On the green sod that covered the sleeping form of little Tim, his mother stood in tender thought upon that Easter-day. And when the sun was sinking, and its western rays glowed on the old tower and window-panes, the lady Gertrude led Constance and Alfred through the park to the church-yard. They stood by the white tomb and read the name, "Mary Clifford," and the day of her departure, and the number of her years; they sat down beside it, and the mother told her children how the young form resting there had walked in love; how she had cheered the

aged, taught the little children, comforted the sorrowful, and been gentle to all. And Constance said,—

"Mamma, can I ever be like her?"

And her mother answered,—

"By the love of the same Holy Spirit you can."

Little Alfred said nothing, but laid his tiny hand on the white stone, and felt near to the sleeper. The sinking sun shone on his young uncovered head, and shed a radiance around it,—a light from above; and the mother looked on her boy, and silently prayed that his life might shine ever bright in the light of the Lord.

It was this Easter-tide that William was to claim his promised bride, and preparations on all sides were beginning. Constance and Alfred had made many already. Every now and then they quite forgot all prospect of a parting, a new home, and a wedding; then, suddenly remembering, treasures long packed had to be brought out again to see the light; then reconsigned to paper or box, and hid out of sight. And as Mercy could not be employed in any of these proceedings, Olivia proved exceedingly useful, and a smile of welcome always greeted her in the nursery, from the quiet face of that queen of nurses, Betty Cox.

Mr. Clifford had said that the wedding breakfast must be given by himself, and was to be under a tent in the park. This was not for Mercy's sake alone, though her whole life of faithful service had been

devoted to his mother, and was, therefore, sure to be acknowledged by him; but also as a mark of his respect and regard for William Smith, who held the place of steward of his farms. The day was to be made a festival; for all respected the farm-steward, and many had a tie to him of grateful feeling for kindness done or sympathy shown them in some time of need. Mr. Clifford also wished to mark his esteem for Mr. and Mrs. Smith, and for their daughter Rose, who was more beloved and respected, and that with good reason, than any other daughter in the farms around.

Invitations were given with due discretion, and Mrs. Smith had no limit set to the number she was free to invite. Countless visits were paid to the new farm-house at Broadmeads, except by Mercy herself, who did not see her new home before her marriage-day; but her thoughts were turning there with a confidence of love that reposed like a child's on the heart she had trusted.

It was the last market-day before the bridal. William went alone to the town, not to sell corn, — he did not take in a sample that day, for other business pressed. There were last stores to lay in, last purchases to make for the home of his bride; there were commissions from his mother, commissions from Rose, things that Molly thought of, and things remembered by himself. Amongst these last were certain presents he intended to make to the

laborers who had long served his father. reaching the town, and stabling Black Bes first thing he di l was to walk to Ivy Lai found all the comfortable appearances of proved since his former and first visit the had brought a plum-cake for little Sue, mad sister for her. The child was greatly delig was the first plum-cake she had ever posses weight astonished her, and she showed it t who looked up in surprise.

Then William said to Benjamin Tovel, " ' next is my marriage-day, and I wished to m a little cheer on the day ; " saying this, he shillings in gold in the hand of the blir Benjamin Tovel thanked him gratefully, pressed his own heartfelt desire for the best l of this life and that which is to come, both and his bride ; and little Sue looked up from ing her plum-cake, and the spirit-light in h as they were upraised at William, spoke si him of a blessing from a higher life than thi as he turned to go, his look of interest ling the child, as one sometimes looks unconsci the lovely when they are passing away.

" Molly," said Mrs. Smith, " just step, e — quick ! Who is that by the side of your William in the gig ? "

Molly strained her sight, shaded her ey said, —

"My sight aint nothing so good as it was. I'll be bound if I know! There, now they be by the elms; I can see them plain enough, but as to who sits in the gig, if you would give me a pound I am sure I couldn't say!"

Mrs. Smith stood in silence, but her firm lip was quivering; her eye followed the gig till it stopped at the gate; then an active form gave a spring, without use of the step, and vaulted over the gate before setting it open for the gig, as if leaping for joy. Mrs. Smith drew her breath quickly, and could no longer see plain; then a voice loud and clear, as one that often rose above winds and waves, shouted, "There's mother! my mother!" A bound up the green hill, and folding both arms around her, he murmured again those magic words of earth — "mother!" and "home!" And William, drawn by Black Beauty, came slowly winding his way, smiling in love on the rapture before him. Rose had heard the shout, and, hastening out to see, joined the welcome. Farmer Smith, in from his fields, a little spent with the warmth of an Easter-day, had dropped off asleep in his high-backed arm-chair, but woke up, as he thought, to the vision of a dream! There was no end of welcomes: the laborers, with their baskets slung over their shoulders, just stopped at the garden-gate, now on their way home from the day's work, to shake hands with Master Ted, and they all said the same kind words, one after

another, 'Glad to see y sate home, Master Te
and hope you hold well." And Ted made answ
to each, and gave a sailo grasp of the hand; a
Dony, who had not long l n promoted to the hi
office he held, stood in full view, and said, "I
cow-boy to my mistress w, Master Ted." A
Sukey, who, as well as D y, was a child of o
of the farm-laborers, man ed to look out from t
cow-house as each cow flue d her pail, and said
herself, "Master Ted wont know that I am to sta
as whole-maid up at Broad neads when my mast
William gets married!" And Ted turned at leng
from all the greetings arou nd, from human hear
and hands, and the dumb creatures gifted wi
memory of friends, and said to his mother, as he s
down by her side to tea, — "O mother, the old oce
could never fill the heart of your boy, if it were n
for the home he comes back to on land!" So T
would be at the wedding, and this was a gift dear
than all costly adornments to enrich the occasion.

Answers to invitations had arrived at the far
Mr. Samson Smith in London had been asked,
this happy occasion of the eldest son's wedding: b
Mr. Samson Smith had inquired who the bride w
and when he found it was a portionless maid
once a poor village child, he replied that he "thoug
his nephew might have looked higher than that;
must beg himself to be excused from the wedding
but Samson intended to come. F Smith look

distressed at this letter from his brother, and said, "I thought he would take it up and stand against it like this. 'Tis certain our boy has not looked out for this world!"

"And what's the need that he should?" replied Mrs. Smith. "He may leave that to them that have no promise to lean on. I say, William has taken the God above at his word, for is it not written, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you?'"

"Ah, wife, you see farther than I do, I fear. I am always looking after the bit of the way we have to tread here, and you look clean over to what lies beyond."

"Not wholly so, neither," Mrs. Smith replied; "but this I do hold to, that the good part of the Bible minds us of, brings the lesser part with it; leastways it does so unless it be ordered different. I reckon we have to make it our concern to choose that good part, and trust for all that may follow."

The next answer was from Mrs. Smith's brother, Mr. Benson, the Derbyshire farmer, saying that it would give him the greatest pleasure to come and spend a week with his sister, and bring his wife and eldest daughter to attend his nephew's wedding, to whom he wished all joy on the happy occasion. This promise gave great comfort to Mrs. Smith and joy to Rose, who was warmly attached to her Derbyshire

relatives, and had learned much in time past from association with them.

Joe, of course, was to come from the merchant's office in London; for what preparations could be happy without expectation of him! But great was the surprise, and even a slight consternation was felt, when, only two days before the wedding, the following letter was received: —

"My dear Mother, — Don't be alarmed if an unexpected guest should accompany me to-morrow. My good friend, Mr. Merridew, says he has been talking for years of a visit to father and you, and he thinks that no time could be better than this. He is the truest-hearted, noblest old fellow that ever made a fortune. As soon as ever I told him that William was going to marry, he would have it all out, — as like as could be to those years long ago, when William first met him on the top of the coach. So I told him all; gave him Mercy's history from the days of her childhood; and when I chanced to say that I thought William's love first grew out of pity, he looked daggers at me, and said, 'Take right estimates, man. I know that brother of yours well, and I can answer for him he has chosen a woman he can reverence in love.' He looked so serious that I believe he thought he was teaching me how to wed. But, mother dear, he is coming down with me to-morrow, outside the coach. Don't let it flurry you;

he hates preparations, and will like it the better if he has to fare as he can. He says I am to tell you an easy-chair will do for him all the same as a bed. What a party we shall be! What kindly comfort will grow out of this wilful marriage of my parental brother Will! Look out for us, mother, but not the whole day. We cannot be with you until near upon six. Now I must to business; but I don't know how it is, I never can settle when I am reckoning on home. Love to my father; he and Mr. Merridew will be close friends, I am sure, by when an hour is over. Tell Ted that I leaped over bales in the warehouse as high as a ship, not including the topsail, when I heard he was come.

"Your dutiful, affectionate son,

"JOSEPH SMITH."

Mrs. Smith and Rose hastened their best inventions in way of preparation, and soon made comfortable arrangements for all. These were not the only guests expected. A friendship had now long grown up between Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Mansfield. Jane Mansfield had been several times on a visit to the farm, and each year strengthened the mutual regard. Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield were invited to come. Jane could not accompany them, as she did not return home at Easter; and the eldest son could not leave the business in his father's absence: but Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield were most happy to come

Mrs. Smith had continued o wear, as her best dress, a gown of black silk; s she always did manage to get all her dresses, l ts, and shawls, with some tinge of mourning about them, though no sorrowing words passed her lips ow for her child in the skies. But as Easter d w on, one evening, when Rose was at the Hall, and her father had dropped asleep in his chair, as he often did when the day's toil was over, William had said to his mother, —

"Easter-time minds us of life, don't it, mother?"

"Yes, lad; you didn't think I misdoubted of that?"

"No, mother."

Now Mrs. Smith never liked a meaning that did not at first sight appear, and William knew this; but, somehow or other, he felt at a loss in what he wanted to say; feared not gaining his point, it might be.

"What, then, are you after?" said Mrs. Smith. "Speak your meaning out, if you have any."

"Well, then, mother, it is your best dress I was thinking of; that black silk always will have a sad look to me. I suppose it is because you have worn one ever since we lost little Tim?"

"And is not the poor child worth that one small remembrance?" asked Mrs. Smith, mournfully.

"O mother, not a dark memory; the thought of him must be bright. I sometimes thi most see him a happy angel above."

"Ah, son, that's all right and true enough for you; but I, who broke his young heart, if ever mother did, ought to go mourning for my child to the grave."

"Now, mother, I do believe it is that black gown keeps up those dark thoughts in you. I doubt if ever children loved a mother better than yours have loved you. And as to little Tim, there can't be one that loves you like him, for his love is one now with the love of God."

"I have the hope of forgiveness," Mrs. Smith said, still speaking in sorrow.

"I am sure, mother, you know more about these things than I do; but yet it does seem to me you take that up the wrong side, as if forgiveness were a thing that held one off at a distance, instead of being just that that brings us nighest of all. Sure there can be no place so near to the heart of our Father as that place made there by the blood of his Son, for them he has forgiven! As I take it, mother, there is no love up in heaven so deep and so tender as love that has forgiven."

"Well, Will, I believe you are right in the main. What! did you want to dress up your mother in gay colors again?"

"No, mother, not to say gay; but do you just look here, mother; this dark, handsome, plum silk, — that's my fancy for you. I was always looking about, in shops and out, till I fixed my eye on this.

I saw in a minute it was just the thing that I wanted. I went in, and said, 'just let me have that silk;' and I bought it outright, without asking the price. A thing that I don't know that I ever did before."

"'Tis handsome, my son; I will have it made up, and put it on for that day, and stand your father's surprise, for I am sure he wont know me."

"I don't know, mother; I am pretty sure, for my part, if we put you on a queen's robes you would look yourself still. But will you wear it on Sundays too, mother? My first look will be always for you, when Mercy and I come to church."

"I will, if it don't look too fine; and it shall keep me in mind that forgiveness is heaven!"

And now, on this evening, two days before the wedding, Mrs. Smith called her son William to her room, and opened a drawer; there, folded up with lavender, lay the plum-colored silk, ready-made as a dress, with white muslin ruffs for the wrists, and a large new white neckerchief, folded ready in plaits; and in a bonnet-box beside it a black satin bonnet, trimmed up with black lace; and, done up in a parcel, a white crape shawl, that Joe had sent down for the mother to wear. And William looked on them with a smile as admiring as if they had been the attire for his bride.

Samson was expected to arrive with Joe and Mr. Merridew. The influences over Samson's life had

not been calculated to call to the surface any deep feeling that might be within. He had been a boy of steady purpose, and he was the same as a man. He would have stood in the lines amidst a shower of grape-shot unmoved, but he could not throw a glow over the surface of life by expression. He had been sent early to London. His uncle was a man of honorable principle in business, but the love of money had grown upon him with the rapid increase of money; and this soon tarnishes nobleness of character, and deadens all grace. Samson made no independent friends; in business hours he worked steadily; in quiet hours he read. His gay London cousins called him their plough-boy relation; but he never resented their mirth, and was always ready to render them any kind service. He had a grave and rather absent aspect; and though he seemed to notice little, it was a fact that he always quietly did what no one else liked to do, and repaired, or tried to repair, what others left undone. This was too readily concluded to be because he had no personal choice, and he gave occasion to this feeling by expressing himself as if things were all much alike to him. Every one reckoned on Samson doing the right thing, but he lacked the buoyant spring that gives action a grace, and the polish of the gem reflecting light from all around.

When Samson heard of his brother's engagement, he wrote one of his usual stiff letters, of some five or

six lines, expressing, in correct words, his wish that they might be happy. He then waited until the suitable time to give gifts, at which time he sent down a shop-bale containing a stock of household linen of all sorts, and with it this note: —

"DEAR WILLIAM, — I thought a supply of household linen might be of use to you now. I hope you will like what I send, and accept it as a wedding gift from me. With my love to father and mother,

"I remain, your affectionate Brother,

"SAMSON SMITH."

As Mrs. Smith unpacked the bale, and took out the varied store, she said, "People may say what they like of Samson, but I am sure there is kind feeling here."

"O mother," answered William, "who ever doubted Samson's kind feeling? I should think him just the man who never felt unkindly."

Mrs. Smith was silent, but this praise did not please her. To her it implied that Samson lacked strength of character. She thought otherwise; but what she could not establish she always held in silence. And little did even his mother guess how Samson had pondered on what gift might be best to express his good wishes, and meet the wants of his brother, — how the bale, that looked like a shop-order sent down, had in each separate article been

selected by him, compared with all others in the shop, and finally chosen as best for its purpose. Feeling as yet wandered at large in his unexplored heart, and found no voice nor language which others understood. But all was warmth in his home, and, if not fully appreciated, he was never chilled in that circle of love.

The next day, the day before the wedding, Mrs. Smith went over for the last arrangements at Broadmeads, and left Rose to complete all things at home. Sukey was already in her situation at the new farm, and thought herself a person of great importance there; "for," said Sukey to herself, "who but I could have made all the things look like this, brought up to it as I have been under Molly and my mistress, Mrs. Smith? There is not a girl, take the whole country round, that could have done it without such a bringing up as that; and I am sure I don't know that they could have done with it, for it is much to stand up to when you come to consider. I should think I best know what the state of the boards was; I almost wish now I had left a small corner just to show, that people who come might know how Sukey can scrub. Then look at the bricks, so to speak, fit to dine off! and the windows, I have not left a speck that does not belong to them. Then only to see how goods and chattels come in! I have no sooner set the new milk-pails in a row, and stood looking a minute to see their rims shine so bright,

than I hear a clatter of pans, and, 'Sukey, take this!' I have scarce settled them when it's 'Sukey, you are wanted!' and if there isn't a man with a cart and the wash-killers come! Then up comes another cart with two dozen of poultry under a net, and one flying out this way, and another gone that; and such a chase, right and left, as I never had before! Then mistress opens the linen, — such linen, to be sure! all made and marked by Miss Rose. I saw the letters on, all set three-cornered ways, — W., M., and an S. underneath. How some people do rise, to be sure! but I suppose 'tis a true sign they are the best, like the cream on the milk, — that stands proof from nature! And for certain it is so, for they say there is not a tongue in the place but would speak up a good word for her; and, in course, for Master William too, — but all the world must know that. Well, by this time to-morrow she will be mistress to me! Of course she knows proper ways, and so will fancy mine, as they come from them who must know better than she can what belongs to a farm. I dare say we shall soon have the gentry up here, when we are all settled in. They say Madam Clifford is certain to come, and I think 'tis likely she will note how things are done; I don't mean the new things, — that's no merit of mine; but Madam will know when boards are well scrubbed, and how bricks look when clean. And then those sweet pretty children, — I long to see

them come in; and that young lady come lately, — I have only seen her at church; but what a heavenly face she has, to be sure! just one as if I were dying, as I was last year, I should dearly love to see near me, and hear her speak those same words that did sink into me then. But I must go a-milking! How nice my dairy does look! — just fit for a princess! The new churn, and the clothes-dolly, and the big scales on bright chains, and the pans all in a row. 'Tis a pity to use these new pails, to be sure; but I suppose, when folks marry they like nothing that's old. I don't know how things are ordered then, because I never was a bride, though I may be some day, if Johnnie keeps true; and I do believe he will; only he wishes to save, and do well by his mother, and so I do by mine, for they be both widows, and there's been a deal of trouble for them. But I wont think any longer, or work will never be done!"

Mrs. Smith had returned to the farm, and the evening drew on. She had on her black silk, for it was only the eve of the wedding; but she gave William a smile when he saw it — one of her rare smiles, that, to her children, always kindled a light that could almost turn black to white. The weather was not cold; but Mr. Smith said travellers might be, and the bright flames were creeping over logs laid in order. The long tea-table was set with the best the farm could produce; the front door was open; wheels

were heard, then pleasant Mr. Smith hastened out, — the travellers were c William had taken his young favorite Nora to e Mr. Merridew, and borrowed another gig in v Joe drove Samson home, drawn by Black Be . In came the travellers, with greetings on all s, welcomed by Mr. Smith and the Derbyshire le. Mr. Smith and the aunt, the aunt's daughter d Rose, the four sons, were all there; and the pre e of the genial London merchant seemed the crown of the whole.

And where was the elected bride? Tears had dimmed her eyes that day, and when alone she wept, — wept at leaving her beloved mistress, the Lady Gertrude, the children, and those elder servants of the house, to whom she had been as a child; she thought of her new ho so ar, and feared for the first time as its day appr l. The preparations seemed great; and, though she knew the honor was for William, yet he had cho her. Let her tears flow to-night; they fall fr a cloud gathered up from her heart's deep a s, and sunshine will be hers on many a to-morrow.

CHAPTER VI.

THE sun of the next day arose behind a gray bank of clouds, concealing his brightness, while the dawn walked the earth, gently waking all nature, before the sun shot his dazzling beams from the clearer depths of the sky. The voices that answer the call of the dawn are the purest and happiest that rise up to heaven. The birds with their anthem of praise, the bleat of the fold, the lowing herd of the field, the step of the early laborer, and the sounds of the farm. And, higher far than these, prayer awakens with the dawn: the early horsemen first of all the village laborers arise, breathing from scattered cottage homes the heart's incense to heaven; then gathering numbers awake, and multitudes kneel. Earth pleads, and Heaven answers in blessing. If our eyes were opened to behold the vast circle of prayer as the dawn lightens the regions of land and sea, from the hoary head bowed in adoration to the babe lisping in praise, we should feel ourselves, while still on earth, as one of the "multitude no man can number, giving glory to God and the Lamb."

At the farm no laborers came up to work; the day was a festival; wages were paid, but each was his own man that day. Mrs. Smith was up betimes, even earlier than usual; but not so early as William. He left the house still sleeping, and turned out into the gray of the morning. That day was the farewell to the dear home of his lifetime, — the welcome to another new and untried. That day he turned from his mother, and the father whose pleasant voice in all business questions would answer, "Ask Will;" but the smile of the future gathered its light from the past; and when, as the hour fixed for the farm breakfast drew on, he came in, and met the greetings of all, that light beamed on his face, silently telling that he had been like one of old when awaiting his bride, — walking in the fields to meditate and pray.

The London merchant rose early; opened his white-curtained windows; met the breeze of the morning from the ploughed land, and from over the primrose and violet banks, and the woods where the palms were in bloom; heard the rapture of the birds from the copses below, — that passion of song that awakes a soft Easter morning, — and looking out from his window, he saw Rose in her farm-gown of blue print, with her white pigeons flying to her hand as she stood on the green turf. "Peace be to this house!" he said; "for the Son of Peace is surely here!" and he turned from his open windows to the large white easy-chair by the little round table, where

his Bible lay. Hearing Joe's cheery voice below, Mr. Merridew went down, and was soon engaged in inspecting farm arrangements with him and his father. The early breakfast hour was approaching; Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield had arrived; William had just come in at the front door; but where was Ted? One voice answered another, still asking "Where?"

"I only hope he is not up to some mischief," said Mrs. Smith, in her old tone of suspicion.

"Now, mother," answered Joe, "you know very well Ted left all his mischief in the first wave of the sea."

Mrs. Smith shook her head in significant doubt. Nothing could be done, because was Ted not in.

"There he is, I declare!" said William, "flying home on young Nora!" And William hastened out in no little alarm.

The sailor-boy bestrode the spirited creature without saddle or bridle, only halter in hand, as he had loosed her from her stall; and two empty sacks, fastened in the middle, dangled one on each side. Ted rolled himself off just as William appeared, while all were looking on in anxiety from within and without. Nora's sides were white with foam, and her fiery nostrils distended.

"What a pace she does go!" said Ted; "twenty knots to an hour! At least pretty near that, some part of the way."

"You wild sailor!" said William, "I shall lock

the stable-door; you can't ride my horses as free as the white horses of the old sea."

"Now, Will, didn't she go her own pace to her pleasure? I never so much as once chirruped her on."

"Hers would be a run-away pleasure," said William, as he patted Nora, and led her away; "the wonder is, you and my best horse are not both broken-kneed."

Ted hastened on to set the stable-door open, and as he saw the fine creature enter he said, "I do think I was clever to bring her safe home; I had a little business that was in haste to be done, and I thought she would be the fastest cutter, so I just gave her the run."

All now quieted down for the sweet worship of home; and when the psalm was sung, the voice of the broad-chested sailor-boy rose in the midst, like the tones of old ocean in some cavern haunts of the sea.

When breakfast was over and the party scattered awhile, to meet again presently on their walk to the church, Mr. Mansfield said, in low confidence, to Mrs. Smith, "I can give a guess what your sailor-son was after. He was in at our shop yesterday buying whole pounds of our best tea — I can't say how many — and sugar to match. I know I thought the bill would be large, and suggested quarters instead, or half-pounds at least, supposing they were

for gifts; and he replied, 'Now, that would be mean, cutting the old folks down like that upon Will's wedding-day!'" So, without more inquiry, it was easily discovered that Ted had been his round of the parish on Nora with sugar and tea, and reports of those who had seen him flying fast with his sacks depending on each side, and the horse looking wild, were not slow in coming in, as, in their love for the sailor-boy, many feared for his safety. And when, after breakfast, his mother said, "Ted, take care of your money," he answered, "Then, mother, I must give it to you;" and turning out both his pockets he went penniless that day. William went to the stable in quiet concern to see what could be done for young Nora, for Josh, the house-servant, had gone over to Broad-mead's, no one seemed to know why, and there was no one else in the way. But on the stable-door hung a coat, and when William went in, there was Samson, with shirt-sleeves turned up, grooming Nora's hot sides, as well as if he had never left the farm life for the London counter.

"Now, Samson, this is too bad!"

"Not at all," said Samson; "it just pleases me. What a rogue that Ted is! he is none the better for sea!"

"I am afraid the old sea spoils him too, like all the world besides," said William. "She wont hurt now Samson; this was good of you!"

"You don't want to t ne
either," said Samson; "y and I ow."
There could be no v on this marriage
morning to the new fa ut all had been
arranged there before, I it aited in peaceful
repose the evening arrival of e bridegroom and
the bride. Sukey awoke that morning, but
rather in a flurry, and said to self, "There, now,
if it wasn't that new clock woke me! What a
voice it has got! It frightened me for a minute, it
was so like the call of my tress — my 'old mis-
tress,' must I say now? — M Smith; when I have
taken a little nap after Molly s up, and it sometimes
would last a minute more t it should. And time
I should be up now, for I am sure none can say what
I have to do before sunset to-day. By that time I
shall see the bride and bridegroom drive in. I
don't suppose it can make any change in them that's
particular, and yet folks do seem to consider brides
and bridegrooms a sight. They do say the me
are going to ring for good-will, Master William
such a favorite with one and another; so they ha
banded together that they wont take a penny, a
they mean to ring such a peal that the whole co
try will hear. Well, 'tis no use saying that
folks can give nothing; let the bells answer that w
we hear them ring! I suppose I shall get no
ding-bells rung; but two hearts will be glad,
that's music as good. I don't mine and

nie's, but his mother's and mine, and they be both widows; so that's better than bells. But I'll think no more of that. Why, there be the cows, and I have not opened a shutter! Well, it is only just five, and they wont marry till ten; and then they wont be making their way out here till the sun begins to decline, because they are all to tramp over the fine park and gardens just wherever they like. Well, I must say, 'God bless them on their marriage day!' and me, a poor girl, and make me ready for mine; and keep me in true honest ways all the days of my life by his grace from above (for I can't do it myself), and forgive me my sins; and keep Johnnie out of all harm; and bless my dear mother, for she is a widow! This I pray, for the sake of Jesus my Saviour. Amen. There, I shall never be behind time for that! I have heard say, 'No one ever lost time by a prayer.' I do believe it is true; for when I have slept late, and run down without, work has dragged on heavy all day. I have told Johnnie so, and he said he had minded the same when he had stepped out without kneeling to pray.

"Now Jessy, and Rosebud, and Cheery, and Pippin! What do you call that young cow out there, boy?" "Ladybird." "Oh, yes; I remember it now; I must be up in their names for my young mistress to-morrow. There flows the sweet milk, and well it may in such a pail. I wonder whether Johnnie

will wear a favor to-day? They say the men will who wait, and Johnnie is sure to be one. I know he will lay up his favor for me, — it might turn up again on our own wedding-day; he ought to wear a favor when he marries me! There now, if I didn't say I would think no more of that! Now, Rosebud, move out, and let Ladybird in. You will all have a bride for your mistress to-day. How cheery the morn is! just fit for a bride. When I think on it, it does make me wish I were there. How fine master William will look, to be sure! Molly just gave me a sight of what he was to wear, — new top-boots, a blue coat, blue neck-tie, and white waistcoat, with the smallest little blue flowers sprinkled over like print. But they say the stuff was called jean, and the flowers blue 'forget-me-nots.' If they be so, it was a way of speaking without words to his bride! I wonder how Johnnie will look when we marry? There, now! 'tis no use resolutioning more. And what call can there be that I should not think of Johnnie? I am right sure all the day he will be thinking of me, and have tales to tell me as good as if I had been there. Well, now I have done milking; I have had no breakfast yet. I would stay about that; I can feed by-and-by, when the dairy work's done; then there will be a minute to sit and consider. There springs up a lark! That's a good sign, they say. No bride is so blithe as the bird of the sky, singing into the blue. Sure

must be to learn us there can be no cheer like the straight way to heaven, and the call may come for me before ever I be a bride. Let me bethink me of that, that I may strive to be ready."

The hour for the marriage was half-past ten, and at ten by the farm clock, always fast, the bridegroom's party set out. They crossed some pleasant meadows, a nearer way than the road, and more retired from view. The meadows opened into a lane that led up the hill to the church. The party walked at large, and talked one to another; only William had his mother, and she leaned on his arm. There stood the old church-tower on the hill, half-shaded by trees! Mrs. Smith thought how unchanged it looked since that morning, at the spring-tide of the year, when she bore William in her arms, her first-born, to his baptism. Again she thought how her sad eyes rested on it when she first trod that pathway to the grave of little Tim. The old church-tower looked the same, but how much nearer now seemed the heaven above it! On this morning, full of a peaceful mingling of joy and sadness, to her it seemed as if the blue sky bent low over the old tower in the sympathy of love, and she felt as if looking up straight to the dwelling-place of God, through the mantling clouds of white, into the depths of the blue beyond. William's thoughts were on earth; they had entered the church, and he fancied that already he saw the dear form arrayed in her simple

garments there, ready to devote herself to him, and with him to God.

And now they reached the lane, crossed the bridge of one plank, where a streamlet rippled clear, and climbed the hill. The great elms stretched their branches overhead, all tipped with leaflets of the spring, while thousand wild flowers in the banks gemmed the soft green in which they nestled. William stopped on their way, arrested by the perfume of the violets; he gathered two or three, and laid them in the white folds of his mother's neckerchief; then, plucking a primrose with its leaf, he slipped it in his button-hole, and said,—

"I like this flower right well. It is the first of spring, and blooms in bitter winds, and under dreary skies. I have seen it peeping up from out the snow. I'll wear it now for Mercy's sake; for I believe, mother, that's how she 'll live for me."

They were early at the church, for William had started at the time at which his mother thought it right to go; but the neighbors were already gathered or gathering there. The church was filling fast, and village men in Sunday dress were waiting near the porch.

"You see we are late," said Mrs. Smith to William. "I knew we should be!"

"No, mother, not late; our time is good by half an hour yet. Look up, see, there's the clock will tell you that."

William was not prepared for all the gathered throng; and he felt his mother trembling on his arm. The men bowed silently as they passed through. Jem, too, was there in waiting by the door, to give his niece away; and Patience at a little distance, with Alice clinging to her hand, and little Willie in her arms. The fatherly clergyman, who knew and loved them all, was there already, and came forward to take them to the vestry. There he talked awhile with the elder friends, but William stood in the chancel awaiting his bride, and his mother knelt beside him, and as she knelt she wept.

And now came the bridal party, the old servants of the Hall attending Mercy Jones. When entered, they divided, and showed her in the midst, leading little Maud, with Constance and Alfred attending on her. Constance and little Maud wore their robes of white, with a long sash of blue, and Alfred wore a vest of blue. They led her on in full persuasion, it was evident, that she was given into their care to-day. Jem, seeing this, held back, and the sunbeam of a smile glanced down the ranks of faces looking on at the bride encircled by such attendance. A few moments more, and Mrs. Clifford entered, leaning on the arm of her son; it was her wish to be present at the marriage of her favorite maid; and the Lady Gertrude and Olivia followed. They went into the Squire's pew in the chancel, and the service began. Little Maud had not been in the church

since the day of her baptism, but her pre
this occasion could not be denied; and sta
the full light of all the grave, kind eyes of
servants of the Hall, her good behavior cou
doubted. She climbed up on the step b
they stood, and placed herself between M
William, facing all her assembled friends.

When the minister said, "Who giveth thi
away?" and Jem replied, "I do," Alfre
rather displeased, and moved his place of
to one between Mercy and Jem. Mercy
glove into little Maud's hand, as she show
signs of thinking the time sufficiently lon
little voice very audibly said, "Tank 'ou;"
immediately wanted the ring, and made
remonstrance at not obtaining the treasur
Cox put up her finger, saying, "Hush! hus
little Maud looked up at the bride and bri
repeating, "Hus! hus!" Unnecessarily
Mrs. Brame with something of her old ton
thority, said, "Be quiet!" Little Maud
her, then, appearing to understand that sil
required, she looked up again, and, with a
at Mrs. Brame's emphasis, said, "Be criat!"
was in no way disturbed by the sweet echo s
below, and William only thought it adde
beauty of all; but Mr. Clifford said to L
trude, "Shall I take her away?" Lady
shook her head, knowing separation was i

now, and this had induced Mrs. Cox to let her stay; in truth, it only completed the charm; for when events are in themselves bright and happy, slight incidents take the same coloring, and blend in the harmony.

The sacred service completed, the names entered and witnessed by Mr. Clifford and the London merchant, William led out his bride, little Maud shaking her head when desired by Mrs. Cox to give up the glove; so the ring went uncovered, and all might see its bright gold. Many hands, worn with labor, were thrust out to William's for a friendly grasp, and kindly benedictions fell on them as they passed; and the aged merchant following, looked round in heartfelt delight. Mr. Clifford had hastened out alone, and he now made William put his bride into the carriage and drive with her to the Hall; so William and Mercy had those few moments alone, while the bells smote the air, and the swift-footed horses bore them on through the park.

Far and near flew the tidings on the brazen wings of the bells; the old people, too aged or too sickly to walk, heard the peal, and put on their tea-kettles, and took out their whole pounds of tea, — few had ever possessed a whole pound before, — and with love for the sailor-boy, and thoughts for bride-groom and bride, they put in an added spoonful above the usual allowance, and prepared for their feast at

home, whose only luxury was tea. The bells brol on Molly's ear at the paternal farm.

"God bless them!" she said. "How I rememb his birth, and the fancy my mistress always had f little Mercy! That child never angered her, l what else might go wrong; it must have been t token of this that was for to come. And then, th the orphan should be taken up by Madam Cliffo and trained in that understanding and those pleasa ways, it must have been all the while ordering f this."

"There go the bells!" said Sukey, at Broadmead "what a peal!—they go right to my heart; such glad, solemn sound! I could sit down and cry, on that might be a hurt to the bride, for they say y should not shed tears under sound of marriage-bel How I should like to be there! But Molly is n gone, so I could not expect. We are the respon bles, and must stay at home. I wonder how t bride feels? They say she was an orphan, and I h a father and mother; but, it may be, He abo thought the more upon her, for he do notice t lonely, and takes care for them who have none look to but him. Still I am glad I have a moth for 'tis wonderful cheering when I see her come i or I step over to see her and sit down by her si and tell out to her just how all things be; and s sees light in the dark, and can turn a crooked thi straight, as no one else can, not even Johnnie, for

blames all folks but me ; and though I do like to stand clear with him, I know it aint right, and so it don't do me the good that mother's true downright words do. And yet, for all that, she never seems to blame, but orders it so that all turns for the best. I suppose that's because it's my mother! Johnnie is often saying he and I will pay the rent for our mothers, and keep the bit of garden gay, with sauce growing at the back, and little things handy. Dear me, I wish it were now! but I must work my way first. Johnnie has saved twenty pounds, and I only three; but now I am in a real place I shall do a deal better ; and Johnnie knows I am young, and says that's a plenty for me. How early I have done all the work, to be sure! It's dull when there is none to make any more. I think I will travel once over the house, and give a look at all things again ; there may be some oddments still to be done, though my mistress — my old mistress, I mean — is such a one to leave the ground clear as she goes. I would set up a posy, but the bride will have flowers, and 'tis certain she will like her own posy the best. How pleasant her room lies! right facing the sunrise ; and then, from the other window, looking out where he sets ; and over the yards all new-covered with straw, and the buildings all round, a home for each kind. How the dog pricks his ears! he can't know about weddings; and yet one would think he was listening to the bells. The horses, too, must consider

at they have two Sundays this week, and not fa
at neither, for it does seem sacred and solemn; an
et there is gladness, and the sunshine looks happy
How wonderful neat all things look here! and th
dimity curtains as white as the snow; but the board
the strength of my arm lies in them! There
everything neat, best chamber and all. Now I wi
lay out my new dress,— I must not put it on unt
afternoon; yet my work is done, and who knows b
Johnnie might come! So I think I will put it o
then I can sit down and sing; it will pass time awa

"There, now I am ready, let who come that wil
But what ought I to sing? It should be a weddin
song, and I only know one that I bought of a peddl
last year; it is rather affecting, but that may be
well: —

"'Hark! it is the marriage-bell!
Sweetly raised o'er wood and fell:
Hark! it is the marriage-bell!

With the morning rose the bride,
Donn'd her veil, her blue knot tied:
Fair as morning was the bride.

Speeding fast o'er hill and dale,
Blood drops on his coat of mail:
Rides the bridegroom faint and pale.

Foully pierced by foeman's dart,
He would reach his bride's warm bed
Ere his soul and body part.

Fainting in her arms he lay,
And she wiped the blood away,
Kissed his lips as cold as clay.

On her breast he leaned his head,
And his noble spirit fled:
Toll the bell for bridegroom dead!

"'Tis melancholy, and not so pretty as I thought. I wish I knew a better; yet the tune is good. Johnnie says he don't consider peddler's songs are worth the singing. I mean to settle my mind not to buy any more."

The carriage had conveyed the bridegroom and bride to the Hall door. On alighting they saw the company coming down the slopes from the church; they walked on to meet them, and were soon lost amidst surrounding friends. When the greetings and good wishes had subsided again into the hearts that warmly expressed them, a survey of the park and gardens began. A large tent crowned an elevation from which a lovely view opened in the distance, and in the foreground lay the lake, shaded here and there by the trees that had for centuries hung over it, their early foliage mirrored in its waters, and the leaves of autumn strewn in its deep bed. Mrs. Smith soon missed her sailor-boy, and her eye looked around in disquiet: he was discovered on the lake, in a fragile canoe that Mr. Clifford allowed no one to enter but himself. But Ted glided over the water with a speed so swift and a balance so true that Mr.

Clifford, who, hearing the outcry, came down t
looked on with a personal pleasure.

"O papa, may I go?" asked little Alfred.

"Not alone," answered Mr. Clifford.

"I will take him," said William; "I can sw
little, and our sailor-boy like a fish."

So the light canoe, which had two seats,
to shore. William took his seat, with Alfred
knee; the strong arms of the sailor seemed re
less of weight, and the light bark skimmed the
like the wing of a wild bird. Mercy stood wat
and owned to herself that she never before felt
of the water. Many a swift row was given
London merchant himself took a circuit, an
Derbyshire farmer, but Mr. Smith declined th
cursion. The attraction was great, but the bell
for the repast. The company invited moved
the tent, while the villagers found seats on the
and baskets of good cheer were brought out to

In the tent, the table was set out in plentiful
adorned with fair flowers, and a bride-cake in
centre. The Rector sat by Mrs. Smith, who sti
teemed him her best friend. The merchant sa
Lady Gertrude's right hand, and the Derby
uncle on the left; they were both men of most a
able manners and superior intelligence. The
Gertrude, though somewhat silent herself, poss
the power of drawing others out; and the conv
tion was full of mutual interest and pleasure.

Clifford undertook the far more difficult task of making conversation general; but he lived heart to heart with those around him; he had cared for their welfare, — personal, relative, and social, and they had responded; for he understood the right balance, by which he did not lay himself out alone, but led others, by his frank declaration of his mind on all subjects, to do their part as well. This was one great secret of his success in influencing others. They felt sure of knowing his mind, and free to speak theirs. This opened the way to confidence on all points; all felt at ease with him, — a feeling which the most devoted kindness alone will not impart.

After dinner there were speeches. The London merchant's was delivered with a thrilling effect; he spoke with a living power, touched with exquisite skill each link of feeling, — the marriage-bond of that day, the ties of filial and parental affection, the union between the Squire and his tenantry; and, lastly, the true brotherhood of man. All listened in deepest interest, which was expressed by Mr. Clifford, when he rose, in thanks for that speech; but the tear that filled many an eye was the most eloquent response. William made a short, simple, and beautiful reply to all the kind wishes expressed for his wife and himself. And now, as all seemed concluding, Ted whispered to Alfred, who had chosen to sit by the swift-handed rower, —

"Your turn is come now, sir; you must make a speech."

"Must I?" said Alfred.

"Yes, of course," replied Ted. "Go, and a your papa."

So Alfred slipped down from his chair, and, goi to his papa, said, —

"Papa, must I speech?"

There was a cry of "Yes, yes!" And Mr. Cl ford, greatly amused, lifted Alfred up to a stand his knee.

"What must I say, papa?"

"I cannot tell you. What have you to say abc Mercy?"

Alfred looked at Mercy, considering; then ve deliberately said,

"Mercy is good; Mercy is kind; Mercy is clever, — she mends our broken toys!"

There was a general applause at this clim amidst which Alfred descended. But now lit Maud shouted, from her highbacked chair by Olivi side, "May, too?" being desirous of nothing mc than the promotion to her father's knee.

"Ladies don't make speeches, Maud," said h father; but little Maud was determined to follo and the assembly began to demand a hearing f her. So Maud stood on her father's knee, looki round in great glee.

"Now, Maud, for your speech. See, there Mercy. What have you to say?"

Little Maud looked, and seeing Mercy, stretch

out her little arms, shouting "Mer! Mer! — May! May!" This speech, blending the two names, and adding nothing more, was considered perfection; and as little Maud's arms were still stretched out to Mercy, she was allowed to make her own way over the table. Many hands were extended to guard and guide the fair baby, as she stepped on amidst fruit and flowers in her little blue shoes, until received by Mercy she sat content on her knee.

After the repast, the house was opened as well as the park and gardens, and many beautiful things were seen and admired. Tea and coffee were provided early. William had Black Beauty held at the gate, and prepared to take leave. When the children found Mercy was departing, little Constance, who had had the weight on her spirit all day, clung to her, sobbing. Alfred put on a brave face, and said, though with a very choking voice, —

"I do not cry! I shall go and see Mercy in her new home very often." And he walked off like a hero unwilling to risk a defeat. Little Maud had been discreetly carried out of the way.

Poor Mercy! But Lady Gertrude stood by; and who would not do their best at self-command in her presence? At length she was safely in the farm-gig, the reins in her husband's hands, and then soon out of sight. The villagers, seeing them depart, raised a shout, — for was not William to

them as a friend ther? The evening
bells rang out himes again, and the
gathered company, d and grateful feeling
at a holiday so b ppy, dispersed.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. MERRIDEW, the London merchant, consented to spend another day at the farm, on the promise that they should all, as an unbroken party, pass the next evening at Broadmeads with William and Mercy.

The party had only just risen from breakfast the next morning when Molly came in, saying, "Master William's at the gate!" They hastened out one after another. William was standing beside Nora, who stood impatient and proud in a new London gig, and London harness to match, "Come, father! come, mother!" said William's cheerful voice. "I want you all to come and see what Joe has done for Nora and me!" There was soon a surrounding of the gig and the horse, a complete inspection, and the highest approval; and Joe stood by enjoying his brother's surprise. "It was last evening," said William, "when I called our man to put up the gig, he said, 'I don't know that I can, master; there be another there already.' 'Another?' I asked; 'is any one here?' 'No, master,' he said;

'but Josh came up this morning, and a ne came along up the lanes here to meet hin there's harness packed up in a box. Woul please to see the gig? I will soon have him o is the handsomest gig I ever did see, or an else here about in these parts!' So I f Mercy and we soon drew out the gig, and I the card upon it. 'The wedding gift of a br —J. S.' You know, father, we were thinkin best to manage with one; but see, now I travel the road like a gentleman."

"One of Nature's own gentlemen you are, Mr. Merridew, aside; "and the refinement tr ligion gives is the highest, I believe."

"Let me have the first ride," said the sai his brother, impatient to be seated and off.

So William started with Ted, after a l shake of his brother's hand as he stepped in new gig, and the gig and harness and Nora William and Ted, drove off to Broadmeads; liam looked back to shout, "Do be up with us —as soon as you have dined."

It delighted Mercy, with William to hel Sukey to explain where all things could be to make preparations for this evening party. all came up early. Father, mother, and Ros Merridew, the Derbyshire uncle, aunt, and Joe, Samson, and Ted. The new tea-servi gift of all the old servants at the Hall, was set

the table, and Mercy did her best to produce the nearest resemblance she could to Mrs. Smith's hospitable table, so familiar to her. There was an inspection of the farm and all its live stock before tea; and after tea, pleasant converse so beguiling the time, that the sun was hastening to leave them before they rose to depart. Before leaving, Mr. Merridew called William and his father apart, saying, "I have a little business with you. I must tell you that it has been one of my comforts in life to provide a small dowry for portionless maidens, when the only thing wanted was money. I have no reason to suppose that the addition of money is of any great importance, Mr. Smith, to your son, but you have done wisely as a father in freely consenting to a marriage of affection full of promise as this is, and though not a farmer myself, I know a little capital at starting may well be increased with a advantage. So I must be allowed, as one of your son's oldest friends, to stand as guardian to his bride, and lay down this small cheque for her portion. My guardianship will not be a long one, my good friends; we shall never meet again: this charming visit will be my last upon earth. I do not know why, but I feel my time near, and the gate of Life brightens before me as I draw near it, in humble hope, that when my Saviour had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened that gate for believers in him. Do not notice this to Joe; he is a son to me; and

I would not depress him until the time be come. You need not tell Mercy until I have left. No thanks are due to me; the pleasure is most my own; I wish none written after me, only reckon me your friend, and the thought that you are happy will shed its brightness on me." The note placed in William's hand contained a cheque for three hundred pounds. Mr. Smith had stayed with his son when the rest of the party walked home. Mercy shed tears when they told her,—not that she could then tell how great the comfort of the money was at this time, but she felt the kindness, and grieved at the thought of soon losing such a friend. The fact that the money was reckoned hers, Mercy took no account of; her husband was hers, and she thought not of herself, nor of anything else but as his. To William the comfort was inexpressibly great; he had worked for his parents and brothers, and could not lay up much in store for himself, and he knew how the least fear of a debt would weigh down the spirit of his father: but this lifted his head above danger of that; he saw the relief in his father's brightening face, and prepared with fresh energy for the labors of life.

Early the next morning Mr. Merridew, Joe, and Samson started for London. William came over with Nora in the new gig to drive his friend and benefactor, Mr. Merridew, to meet the stage-coach; and that drive, the last time he ever saw his friend

became as memorable to him as his first, beside him on the stage-coach, when he was a lad in London in his uncle Samson's shop. How great, how unutterable the amount of blessing that may follow from not walking the earth in a solitary, exclusive abstraction, but realizing that each human being is a brother; then slight occasions may open a door, through which both personal and relative happiness may endlessly follow.

Mr. Benson, the Derbyshire uncle, remained a few days longer. Both Mr. and Mrs. Smith greatly enjoyed the lengthened visit these relatives made. Mr. Smith felt the elevating influence of one who realized, and proved, that his heart and treasure were above; yet one whose opinion all must respect in the business questions of the life that now is, — one who lived above the world he labored in, making it his daily effort to follow the precepts of the divine word as his law, and then casting all corroding care upon his God. His judgment being much thought of by others, he was frequently appealed to for an opinion in questions of business. These appeals, when they concerned dealing with others, he would often answer by saying, with a smile, "'Do to others as you would that others should do to you;' I have striven hard to walk by that rule, and it has been a golden rule to me."

Mr. Smith felt surprised that one who farmed six hundred acres, with only a small funded capital

and nine sons and daughters, should have a mind at leisure for the wide-spread interests of missions; should be rejoicing in Chinamen, Red Indians, and slaves, turning from idols to serve the true God; Mr. Smith, in conversation, fell back on his one familiar subject, the average of crops, the causes of failure in produce, or the estimate of seasons; but the Derbyshire farmer seemed to dismiss his farm from his remembrance, and "would lead you," as Mr. Smith said, "in the length of an evening, all over the earth!" At first Mr. Smith seemed quite at a loss, and not a little tired out by this demand upon him, when he had walked over his fields till set of sun, and considered his day's work all done, then to be stepping from Europe to North America, where Red Indians were beginning to gather together to listen to the words of the Book; then, before ever you knew of the intention, to be landed in Asia, to make acquaintance with some of bright promise there; and, when you had settled your own mind for a quiet doze by the fire, to find you must land on the burning sands of Africa, and spend all that remained of the evening in hopes of eternal freedom for the negro's dark race, and the sympathy of veneration and love for martyr missionaries whose term of life and labor then only averaged two years! Yet, at the conclusion, Mr. Benson looked as bright as if a quenchless sunbeam had made a home in his eyes; and really, to tell the truth, Mr. Smith was not sure

that he did not on the whole feel more lively than when this most unexpected tour round the whole world began.

Sometimes Mr. Benson would speak of his home, — the useful life that his elder children, he trusted, led there; the poor of the village, and his own farming lads; the workhouse, too, for he was in office; and the blessing that would rest on the efforts of only one, if the work, let it be what it might, were but done looking up for better wisdom and strength than our own. Farmer Smith began to ponder on what the difference could be between himself and his brother-in-law, seeing the same hope dwelt within them. And while he thought on these things with a wish to know the truth, light broke in on his mind, as it always will when we so think, and he began to see that he had thought of religion for himself, as a hope to live and die by; not as a blessing, whose all-constraining love was to lead us to desire to draw all men within it. He had lighted his own candle, and by it he himself walked through darkness; but he had not looked around to see who might be stumbling without the guiding ray, nor thought of kindling other lights by that which blessed his own path. He said to himself many times, "But what can I do?" The first expansion comes not naturally to one long narrowed to think only of personal religion. Then he remembered the descriptions his brother-in-law had given of the poor dying heathen,

and Christian slaves, twice emancipated, from the chains of earth and those invisible, and to man alone invincible, fetters, whose bonds are eternal. Mr. Smith had heard a sermon preached once a year, when a stranger stood up in their pulpit, under the disadvantage of asking for money; he had wished their own minister would have told them what they should do in his own familiar way; but it was plain money was wanted; so he gave half-a-crown, which he always had ready when he heard that one of those particular gentlemen was coming. But his brother's descriptions of this man, or that aged woman, or this little child, and the hope that dawned on them, — the tear that would glisten in his brother's speaking eye, — all this came home to Mr. Smith, and he thought the best beginning was to take out a five-pound note and give it straightway to his brother. Then Mrs. Smith gave one of those rare smiles of hers, that only blessed great occasions, but that were in themselves worth a five-pound note to those who felt the glow that smile could impart.

Then, too, Mrs. Smith gathered assurance; she never wanted courage, but she gathered assurance and went to her cupboard, and brought out from the back corner a teacup; it had stood there for years, — ever since that sad yet blessed illness of hers; when Rose, on her return, had told her mother tales of the heathen, and how we could send heavenly instruction to them. From time to time Mrs. Smith

had dropped her willing offering in; but on her brother's former visit she had said nothing to him, and ever since then she had not known what to do with it: she did not seem to have considered it would be at all the right thing to give it to any stranger who might come to take away what money he could gather; so the cup had still held its increasing store, for Mrs. Smith's interest once awakened never slumbered again. Silver had changed into gold; this Mrs. Smith knew, for she had done it herself; but she had not the least idea what was in it; this was no concern, she thought, of hers; she had given what and when she felt that she could; the heap lay in that cup, and that was enough.

It was true that small periodicals came to the farm, in a print far from inviting to those unused to reading. They were laid up with the newspapers when Mr. Smith had read the report in the weekly journal of the sale of corn in Mark Lane, and there they might still be found; for, with many a true heart, paper and ink will not and cannot form the one needed link between its sympathies and the vast heathen race. But the Derbyshire farmer was alive on the subject: hardworking man as he was, and had brought up his children to be, what land could be named from the east to the west which he had not watered with prayer, or his hand not enriched with a gift? He had a personal interest in all; they lived in his remembrance like brethren afar off in need;

therefore no wonder his words fell with power. And Mrs. Smith brought out her cup from the closet, and poured into his hands the uncounted contents. That cup did not return to the tea-tray again, but went back to its corner in Mrs. Smith's cupboard.

It is written, "God loveth the cheerful giver." Who is there that does not prize a love infinite, eternal? Who, then, that will not learn the sweet secret of giving? It is also the secret of increase. We are all quite certain that the poor widow, who cast all her living into the treasury of God, was not left to faint with hunger, nor to languish in want: no ravens came to feed her, no cruse that gave out its store, yet wasted not in giving; but the heart of her God kept hers beating freely in life, and the hand that feeds a world supplied all her need. Mr. Smith soon found that the word of promise is sure, and the soul that watereth others shall be watered itself. When care for the eternal welfare of others, at home and abroad, began to find a place in his thoughts, cares for this life had to find a lower place, no longer filling his thoughts and pressing him hard. And experience will teach us that, wherever an active care for the heathen springs up in the heart, that heart grows richer in the grace and blessing of God, and sheds a more influential light around it, wherever its dwelling may be.

Rose told Mercy the story of the cup, and Mercy, with William's glad consent, set up one for her-

self; for she, too, had a cupboard, and she set up a cup in the corner. And Ted, listening one day, said, in his blunt way, "I ought to give all that goes out from this house; for don't I know the badness where no Bible is found? So, if giving be the way to mend that, just hand out my bag, mother." Mrs. Smith brought out the bag. Ted thrust in his hand, and brought it out filled, he knew not with what. "There, uncle, take that; I never yet counted money, and I wont begin when I want to mend such a bad job as this."

"No, no, Ted," said his uncle; "no desperate giving!"

But Ted was out of hearing, and his mother said, "Take it; none know how soon the sea may roll over his head. I often think so at night when a stormy wind blows; and if I live to see it, it would ease me to feel he had given of his earnings so freely to God!"

"Heaven preserve the dear sailor-boy!" said the uncle, with fervor; "but I really seem to come here to reap a ripe harvest, only waiting to be gathered. I shall hardly content myself, I fear, many years in absence again!" "I hope not," said the Derbyshire aunt; and kind words flowed in response; and so, with every blessing brightening, William's wedding-party broke up.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE few days that Mrs. Cox thought it rig
wait before the first visit to Mercy in her
appeared very long to Constance and Alfred.
the Saturday of that same week Mrs. Cox
not any longer resist their importunity, but
" After dinner we will go." Sally Millington b
leave to carry little Maud, but Mrs. Cox said, '
have not good manners enough as yet, Sally, f
to take you to-day. If you wish me to trus
on all occasions, you must learn a more resp
behavior, and get rid of your free-and-easy
So Sally Millington might not go. In the
noon, when little Maud was laid down to sleep,
was soon after dinner, Constance and Alfred in
delight started with Mrs. Cox.

The day was one of those we often have
spring is mantling winter's barren form in
beauty; brooding in warmth of richest sunshine
the opening life of nature. The walk itself
most beguiling to the children; through lanes
mossy banks were flower-bestrewn, with su

clustering wealth of fair and fragrant blossoms that little feet would linger there ; then through the meadows, where the cowslips hung their drooping heads in countless bells of sweet perfume. These past, the wood came next, and here the children knelt on the old roots of forest trees where violets bloomed, those darlings of the spring. The little baskets were brimful of all the flowers the green earth nurtures in her breast, blossoming there as if to tempt childhood to take its fill of spring-tide flowers and spring-tide joy. Betty Cox looked on her charge in patient pleasure; she loved to see them amongst the wild-flowers, as glad in that sweet sunshine as butterfly or bee. "Hush! hark!" said Constance ; and there, a little way apart upon a hawthorn, a nightingale poured forth its song. Their nurse sat down upon a fallen tree, and the children with their flowers at her feet.

While seated there an aged man came slowly tottering by, — a tall old man, feeble with many years. With his right hand he leaned upon a stick, and with his left he held a bundle of sere wood upon his shoulder. Seeing the children and their nurse, the old man said, as he passed by, "Nicely pleasant to-day!" The children looked at him, forgetting birds and flowers in sight of that old man. A few steps further, and the rotten cord that bound the sticks gave way, and they fell strewn behind him. The old man turned a look back on his fallen fagot, of

helpless dismay, so patient yet so sad, it went
Cox's heart. But in a moment little Alfre
the old man's side, saying, "Don't mind ab
sticks; I will pick them all up — ever
"Bless your dear heart and hand!" the old
"My back do ache that bad already, I cou
hobble home; but the firing be all spent, an
woman craved a cup of tea." Constance
made her way, and helped to lay together t
sticks.

"Do you live far from here?" asked Mr

"Not for young feet to travel, but far
Maybe that you can see the thatch, for the y
scarce rigs the trees, down in the dingle yo

"Is your wife as feeble as you are?"

"Poor creature! she is bed-rid these tv
Have you never heard speak of Dolly of th

"No," said Mrs. Cox. "Have you li
there?"

"Ay, the length of a long life. I was
bred there, and brought my wife home th
she had seen twenty; and a thrifty soul sh
ever trod upon shoe-leather, and wonderful
yet she has wholly failed afore me, and lai
now two years!"

"And have you no children to help your d

"Ay, yes; there be children, and plenty
ten hungry mouths I have fed on a laborer's
no charities ever cross this parish bound;

pent in on the other side, as if they flowed within banks like a river; and yet not wholly so, for that might overflow some chance time with rain, but there's never been a stray drop come watering me."

"Don't your children try to help you?"

"Poor rogues! as for them, why there's little ones to feed, and who be there that wouldn't think of the young mouths afore they thought of the old? Three lads be 'listed, and the others be all mostly settled away."

"Can you read?" asked Mrs. Cox.

"No, I ben't no scholar,—nor be Dolly neither. Why, seventy years agone there was no schooling given in lonesome places like this! and I be turned eighty, and Dolly just under." "Does not your minister call?"

"No; that be not his way; he likes to see folks at church, and we could not get there for many a day."

"You should send to let him know that you are set fast at home, and then I dare say he would come."

"I don't know," said the old man; "'tis likely he might; they say, if you send, he will call in and drop you a shilling; but I don't know. I am sure that aint comfort that lasts; and, one way or another, we never did beg."

The old man stood leaning his weary back against a tree; now watching the children, who had finished

their heap, and now the wood, as if he scarce kn
what to do.

"Look!" said Alfred, when a break in the c
versation allowed. "This old string is good
nothing; I can break it like that."

"I don't know, I be sure," said the old man, wh
spirit seemed broken too; "'tis a bad job, I fear.
will just huddle up a few in my arm and get ho
if I can. Could you have the kindness to ha
them up, pretty dear?"

"Cox," said little Alfred, "I can carry those sti
on my shoulder, you know, just like the old man;
tie them up, will you, Cox? It is only down ther

Betty Cox never checked or chilled a child's ris
sympathy; she would have made any sacrifice rat
than deny compassion's warm impulse; her own s
too, was filled with sadness for these old people,
in life's helpless decay to languish unknown. "E
can we tie them up?" she said to the child; t
taking out her large pocket-handkerchief, she trie
put a bundle inside; but it held too few. "S
we each carry some in our arms?" asked B
Cox.

"No, Cox, that will not do; we could only ca
so few. I want them up on my shoulder, and
let the poor old man carry any!"

Cox looked round in inquiry as to what could
done, when the blue sash of little Constance wa
in the breeze, as if saying, "Here am I, take m

It was a sash of narrower ribbon than the wide blue worn now. Betty Cox said, "Shall we bind up the old man's sticks with your sash?" This Constance thought the best of all things, and Alfred was charmed with the success of his plan to carry the wood. So the sere little branches wore a band of bright blue, and they were laid on Alfred's young shoulder, by his sunny ringlets of hair, and the blue ribbon that bound them streamed over his broidered vest of nankeen. He stepped on beside the old man, and one might almost fancy him saying, "My father, here is the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" "The true son of his father!" said Betty Cox, in her heart; for she had heard from the housekeeper the tale of old Willy. Constance tripped along lightly beside the little woodman, only stopping at every dry stick, which she picked up and gave to her nurse to carry, whose armful grew heavy.

"Take care how you walk!" said Betty Cox to little Alfred; but the caution was in vain; almost as she spoke, he caught his foot in a stump and fell down with his load.

"All right!" he said, as soon as he was up again, and saw the bundle not broken. But Betty Cox saw blood starting. "You have cut yourself, child; let me see!" she exclaimed.

"That's nothing," said Alfred, smearing his little hand.

It was a slight cut on his chin. Betty Cox dipped

her handkerchief in the stream that ran through wood and stopped the bleeding. "Better wour doing good to your neighbor," said Betty Cox, "i with swords on the battle-field."

"I don't know," said Alfred; "knights are bi men and wear golden spurs, and take care of l women; and perhaps I shall be one!

"No, Alfred," said Constance; "you know l says you must live at home and take care of man as he does of grandmamma."

"I can fight all the battles," said Alfred, " then come home and live." And Betty Cox l a sigh, for she thought how many a fair young lay far away from kindred and home in a sold rude grave. But now they were started again old man greatly comforted to find himself stil tended so well. Arrived at the cottage, he wei first, and a feeble voice said, "O Nat, what a we ful time ye have been! and never a stick witl now, and I faint for my tea!"

"They be coming," said Nat, sitting down chair, quite spent with the effort of keeping with the child.

"Here it is," said little Alfred, going in wit fagot and standing beside the old woman's bed.

"Nat! Nat!" said the old woman, "where ye find him? Be he a babe of the wood? the old rope dyed blue! Heaven bless you, darling! But look, there be blood!"

"That's nothing," said Alfred; "and this is for your tea."

"Come Nat," said poor old Dolly, "ye has wiped your forehead enow, and I be in visions and dreams for want of my tea."

Betty Cox had held back to let the boy make his way; but she came in at this, and little Constance with her, and soon persuaded the old woman that it was no dream. She lighted herself the little fire in the grate, to the delight of Constance and Alfred, who had never seen Mrs. Cox light a fire. Then they put on water, and soon made it boil, and left poor old Dolly happy with her tea.

Absorbed by pity and interest for the old man, and the active joy of rendering help, they had almost forgotten the eager start for the farm. But now they set out with fresh glee; no more delays came, and they soon were with Mercy, lost in the gladness of that greeting. They told the tale of the poor old man to Mercy and William, and they promised to see to them, and their seeing after any was a sure promise of blessing. Who could better know than Mercy, trained in it as a child, how to help and comfort the old? And William had never seen a fellow-creature in need without stretching out a ready hand to relieve. When they had poured out their tale of sympathy, they turned from all care to delight in the farm. They were eager to see all things, from the greatest to the least; but the details

of that evening can well be imagined, and we must only take them safely home, where all things were related, and leave them there with each little head on its pillow.

Six weeks had not passed away since Mr. Merridew's visit to the farm, when a letter came from Joe with the signs of mourning upon it. "Where is Rose?" asked her father, who did not seem to have quite the courage to open it himself. At this moment William stepped in, as he often did of a morning. His father held out the letter. "Oh dear, oh dear!" said William; "we know the grief folded there. Here, Rose, you must read this; I fear it's more than I could." They all waited round, and Rose opened and read: —

"DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER, — I have unexpected tidings to tell, — unexpected to me, though it seems they were not to him, my best friend, and, as I may truly say, our best friend, Mr. Merridew. You all know how cheery he was at Will's wedding and so he kept on up to this time; he never had a day's illness, but I noted how he seemed putting all things in order, and he would say to me, 'This thing will be found here,' or 'Those business papers are there.' It always made me feel bad, but it came out so naturally, just as if he had a journey before him. One day, — it was only last week, — I did say to him, 'Do you make count on any

absence that you give me this in charge?' And he smiled and answered, 'Yes, whence I shall not return any more to my desk. I leave that desk to you, Joe; and remember, my son, for such you have been to me, remember that you conduct business on the principles you have seen me work upon. I have had one Guide Book, Joe, the Word that shall judge us in the last day. I have never desired to be a rich man, but I have had enough and to spare, for I may humbly say that blessing that maketh rich has rested upon me. And now, Joe,' he said, 'I have left my business to you; but I have not left you a rich man, only capital to move on, and that capital I wish never taken out of the business, but left by you to whoever may follow when you give up your stewardship. Take my advice,' he said; 'Joe, don't die a rich man. You started poor, and except the little capital I leave you, you will earn all you call your own. Don't hoard up your earnings. Remember, you are not like men who receive wealth which they are bound to leave, not wasted, but improved, to successors. You are a working man; think, then, of your brethren, countless working men; be like the fertilizing cloud, gathering up the moisture to pour it down on the parched and thirsty places around. I made this my object, and now that my working-day is over, I have no more disquiet than a child looking out for its pillow. Not that I trust to any doings of mine; I am but an

unprofitable servant, and if I looked to myself for a moment my record would be, "I have done the things I ought not, and left undone the things that I ought to have done." But I stand in my Saviour; his righteousness is perfect, and he has made atonement for me. You, I hope, will be both a husband and a father; but make no fortunes for your children; let them earn the bread of industry. There is nothing superfluous: the earnings that are hoarded are keeping some mouths hungry, some bodies unclad, and hastening untimely graves. Let it be written on the increase of each year, "Freely ye have received, freely give." I have never married, not because I never loved, but all that is over now. Life has been happy to me, and life eternal draws near.'

"That evening I wrote down his words, lest I should forget; but he said no more, kept on as usual, and asked me to go down to his country-house for the Sunday. On Sunday evening I felt anxious, I hardly knew why, but I ventured to ask if I might sleep in his room. He answered with that kind smile you must so well remember, that in perfect retirement he had long felt nearer heaven than earth, and his sleep would be less sweet if he thought anxious watchers were near. But when his faithful servant went in the next morning, he lay undisturbed on his pillow, but the heavenly spirit had departed. I have wept for him like a

child, and the house is full of weeping, and how many eyes will be dim when they hear he is gone! But, as I say, what a company there must have been on the shore of that better land waiting to receive him!

"It has been a comfort to write to you, though I know it will leave you all sorrowing, yet not without hope.

"You shall soon hear again from your

"Affectionate and dutiful son,

"JOSEPH SMITH."

The family at both farms went into mourning, and wept for their friend. Samson attended the funeral, and the next day wrote one of his brief and inexpressive notes home. In the course of the following week Joe wrote again: —

"DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER, — I am in the house of business again, and my place is at this honored desk, which I am not worthy to fill. I have been with Mr. Butterworth, the friend who was to him as a brother, as much as possible at the country-house, until all the last services of love to the mortal body were over. It was hard work to hide from our eyes that fatherly smile that has lighted the pathway of life to so many! He was buried in the city church, where his departed relatives lay. Mourners pressed in from all sides, — I will not say

to pay the last token of respect, for most surely he must live in remembrance through life, and countless occasions will arise in which his memory will be reverenced, and his wishes fulfilled. The country-house is left to Mr. Butterworth, whose family were like children to him. In truth, who shall reckon up the number who looked on him as a father, or as their best benefactor? Grief flows in from all sides, but it is no use writing of that.

"I will tell you one thing I know of him now, from Mr. Butterworth himself. When young, he gave his affections to one whom he supposed free to respond to them. He waited until he had worked up his way and had all ready to offer, and then learned from herself that she had long loved another, to whom she was not allowed to engage herself, as his means were not thought sufficient. Hearing this, he retired, and directed his efforts to learn all he could of the man whom she loved; then, finding the want of money to be the only hindrance, he so managed things, as, at the cost of a large sum of money, to get him placed in a position that left him free to offer his hand. Our friend had the generous pleasure and happiness of knowing he had secured the happiness of others, and from that time he lived to make this his object in life. There lingers behind him a pathway of light. Blessings unnumbered follow him to his grave, or rather go before him, we may say, to heaven.

"The country-house will be closed for six months; this is Mr. Butterworth's arrangement; for, he says, he could not bring the cheerful life of his home there for awhile; though I rather believe it would have been wished. He kindly says he shall always welcome me there as one who stood as a son in the affections of his friend, and a home in such a family stands second only to my own. There is much now to be done, and will be for me; but, dear father, I will run down, if I can, for a week, when autumn comes on; perhaps put the first sickle to the corn: so you must all cheer up, for, in one sense, we ought not to mourn. And a friend gone before us is not a friend lost, but only a fresh tie to a better world than this. With my love to all,

"Your affectionate, dutiful son,

"JOSEPH SMITH."

These letters were shown to Olivia, when calling to inquire the cause of mourning at the farm; and she was allowed to take them in charge for Mr. Clifford and Lady Gertrude to see. They recalled the interest his short visit had awakened, and it was felt as a privilege and pleasure to have received him that day.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE is a friend who must not be forgotten in renewed acquaintance with the "Ministering Children." The mother of the bookbinding boy still continued a bright example to many. Her box of mercies we told of before. The treasury in her home for God, sacred as his of old in the temple, which was hallowed more in his sight by the poor woman's offering than by all that the rich cast in of their abundance, for he measures gifts by the faith and love that prompt them. Each year that box was still filled with the offerings of that thankful heart. Each blessing that surprised her she hastened to put in her thank-offering, glad at heart as any Israelite of old when he brought his gift to the altar. Her hope was not only what the faithful Israelite felt; for the dispensation of the Spirit calls on all to repent, and the Son of God has the heathen for his inheritance. When her glad hand dropped in her offering, she looked with the mind's vivid eye far over continents and wide-spreading seas to the lands where idolaters once paid their cruel worship

to idols of wood and of stone, and saw them bending the knee in prayer to the true God. She saw the little children who would have been slain by mothers without natural affection, — she saw them cared for with all tenderness by those very same mothers, who had learned to know and believe the love God had to them; saw these rescued little children trooping to school, singing their anthems of praise, and almost heard the glad hallelujah that rose up to heaven. She saw their parents look upon them with inexpressible thankfulness, delivered from the guilt of shedding the blood of their offspring, and treading with them the pathway to heaven. Then another glance showed her the heathen's death-bed, — the heathen that was, but now the child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The poor aged mother, who would have been left to perish in some jungle a prey to the wild beasts, or taken down to die in the cold river's brink, now lying in blessed hope on her mat on the floor, with heaven lighting up her dying eye and kindling her voice, breathing out the blessed words of him who came to save the lost; and, when sinking in the body's death, rising victorious in spirit through our Lord Jesus Christ.

All this, and much more, filled the glad vision of the mother of the bookbinding boy, and, therefore, no wonder the love of Christ still constrained her to make an offering continually in so blessed a cause. And may it not be a question whether, as the poor

men of Galilee were the apostles of the Lord and messengers of the churches, so now the steady offerings of those comparatively poor in this world may not be found the chief instrument in sending evangelists to the heathen world? It is not the torrent that precipitates its waters at one leap to the gulf below which mainly feeds the mighty river that flows on to the sea; but the countless rills that rise unobserved in the bosom of the hills, and wind their way with low warblings of praise, unheard in this busy world except by close, listening ears, but whose music ascends to the throne of the Eternal, where the din of earth never reaches.

We might tell of others who cheer life's hardest toil, and poverty's sharp yoke, by such ceaseless ministries of love; but we are only allowed to tell of this one noble-hearted woman (noble in the estimate Evangelists have taught us), because she was the mother to that ministering child, the bookbinding boy.

One Sunday afternoon this poor woman was coming home from church, when she met in the streets a person of sorrowful aspect, who asked her the time. "I can only tell you," she replied, "by the church service now over; by that we know the hour must be near five o'clock."

"Thank you," said the stranger. "I have been to see my daughter, and am making my way home."

"Have you been to church to-day?" the poor woman asked.

"No, I have no time for church; other things engage me."

"Then go this evening with us," said the poor woman. "I am now going home; come and take a cup of tea with us, and then we can all go together."

The stranger was unwilling at first, but yielded at length. They were long summer days; the thought of tea was refreshing, and the kind hospitality, no doubt, had its weight. So she went in to tea, and then they all went to church. After service they parted at the church-door, and neither knew the name of the other.

Not many weeks after this, when the mother of the book-binding boy was in the church, the clergyman said, from the pulpit, that he had a letter he wished to read; it was to this effect: —

"Rev. Sir, — Not long ago I was persuaded by a poor woman, whom I met in the street, to go home with her to tea, and then attend the evening service with her. I was unwilling at first, for I was not in the habit of attending public worship, but I did go at last, persuaded by her; and that service, I trust, has turned my heart to Christ. I don't know the name of the poor woman, nor the name of the street where she lived; I only remember the name of the church: so I send this to you, as I am now too far away to make any inquiry. If you will kindly make known the blessing that followed her desire to

do good, if she should be church, she will be thankful to hear it.

"I remain, ev. Sir,

"Y s respectfully,

"L. M."

The evening of life w gathering fast around both the parents of the b binding boy, shedding dimness of vision, stealing st ngth from her active limbs, and weakening still mo e her husband's feebler power. One day a knock as heard at the door, and the good wife and mot r opened to see who was here. This time there as no large cart, like that which bore the mangle long years before; no stranger bearing an order in ving disguise from her son, but a small party of gentlemen. The poor woman curtsied, and waited t ir will. To her surprise they walked in; one a book in his hand. They asked her many q ns as to age, family, and circumstances, length of sidence also, and other such questions as these. Th they spoke in an under-tone one to another. T was very mysterious, but it did not alarm the clea conscience and brave heart of the mother of the ookbinding boy. At length they said to her, —

"We are able to make an ffer to you and your husband, that we hope be acceptable, — an almhouse for life, with a all weekly income, and additional comforts belongi

This could scarcely be believed. But then, in that poor woman's generous heart, there arose the feeling for others, and she said, —

"Pardon me, gentlemen, for making so bold to say anything against such a blessing, but should we not be keeping some other poor creatures out who might stand more in need of it even than we, as I can still work for our bread?"

"No," they answered, "you need not fear; we have made every inquiry before coming to you, and you are the only persons who can be presented as meeting the conditions required."

So their cup ran over in blessing; and they went to their little home, and with them went the family Bible; and the box of mercies, itself overflowing; and Ephraim, the youngest son, was allowed to go with them, as he was considered by his mother not yet to have outgrown her care; and the room in the little street that had so long been their home became the abode of the bookbinding son and his family. And so we take our leave of them in a snug little almhouse, with no hard work to do, but time to read and enjoy the peaceful evening of life in thankfulness to God and to man.

Happy days from the adventure of the fagot in the wood rose on old Nathaniel and Dolly. It was to Mercy's delight that they were given her in charge; her own cup of blessing was brimful and running over, with William for her husband, his par-

ents as her parents, Rose as her sister, and a cheerful farm for her home. She was happy to find some on whom to pour out the overflowing happiness of her satisfied heart. Then, too, the sweet work of charity had been hers when a child, sent by her dear grandmother to wait on the aged and feeble. It would come back again in the blessing of remembrance. William rejoiced to see her so ready for real earnest work, as he found on looking in on the woodman that the care of them would be. Mercy was no way daunted by the report that he gave, but held a talk with Sukey on what her master had said. And Sukey made answer, "If there be boards to scrub, or bricks that want cleaning, or such-like work, I will show you in no time what I can do!" So, still further encouraged, Mercy went off to the wood.

Poor old Dolly was alone, lying helpless in bed, and greatly pleased and surprised to see a comely-looking woman come in and sit down by her side, asking her how she did. Old Dolly greatly hungered for news; she had no happier thoughts to fill the void in her heart, now life's work was all over, and the children all turned off: poor old Dolly thought there was nothing left to care about in the world, only news. When old Nathaniel came home of a day, she would say, "What be the news? and he would reply, "How can I tell? There's none comes telling me." And old Dolly would say, "If

I could be stirring, wouldn't I pick it up! But as for you, why, you have no more know than the bricks!" So when Mercy went in and sat down by the bed, old Dolly said, "I am so glad of a friend to step in for a chat; there is scarce a body now will tell old Dolly the news. I dare say you saw the bride that was married up at the next parish church, and such fine doings they say in the Squire's great park; and they do say," said Dolly, lowering her voice, "you know I wasn't there, — but they do say she looked heavenly, dressed so lovely and meek; and three little creatures, like cherubs, round about her. They say she is coming to live alongside of me, — up in Broadmeads Farm, they do say; but I don't know how that may be." It was plain that poor old Dolly was quite as eager to tell as she could be to hear all the news of the day; but now again she questioned: "Tell me, did ye see the grand doings up there? They say she was married into Farmer Smith's family, but I didn't rightly hear who: but they say that the bridegroom looked as great as a prince when he saw her come up the church all set out like that! But did ye see her, I say?"

"I am Mrs. William Smith," Mercy answered, yet blushing the while at all the old woman had said.

"Then, in course, ye did see, if ye be of the family. Now just tell me all, — 'twill be something to think on."

Mercy said, not without some glowing confusion,

'I was the bride." Poor old Dolly shot upright in perfect surprise; then, looking at Mercy, she said, —

"That I should see the bride! and she come herself! It be most like a dream. Give me a shake of the hand, my dear, will ye? That's real! Well, I don't mind the tales that they do tell about fairy folk; but if I did, I should say it was them came in here the end o' last week, and left that bit o' blue ribbon that's hanging up there, to bring me such luck as the sight of the bride. Well, dear, I take it the biggest favor ever showed me, that you should lighten my door with the step of a bride."

Mercy soon discovered that there was everything to be done, but, with Sukey to help, a reformation was made. The house was cleaned throughout, and with the real work done by her mistress, Sukey thought nothing of her own willing labor. A few hours each day accomplished all by degrees. The bedtick was washed and stuffed with fresh straw, making as wholesome and comfortable a bed as any cottage home could desire, especially if renewed once a year, which is easily done in the country. The bed-clothes were old, indeed; but pure wate and air made them fresh. Mercy made two shor bed-gowns and two pretty old woman's caps, and t whole was complete. Nor did she then cease l care, but kept a watch over all, and with Sukey help, things never lost comfort again. And the man twisted a mat of straw, that he might not

Sukey's clean floor. The old people, used in better days to be cleanly and neat, were delighted to see the fresh face things put on. Old Dolly pleased Sukey by saying, —

"There be no music like the scrub-brush to me in a strong, willing hand. And mind ye, young woman, ye will never want for a friend, putting out your strength as ye do for an old body like me."

The old man said, "When I cast my eyes round on the old place, it sets me back half a century, — ay, more; when first I brought Dolly home, before the children did crowd, when all things did wear the shine of her hand." While whatever was requested proposed, or done by Mercy's arrangement, Dolly always said, "It can be nothing but right, for the bride ordered it so."

Constance had persuaded the old woman to keep the blue sash, saying, "You have so few pretty things, I want you to keep that." So old Dorothy had her husband hang it up on a nail opposite the foot of her bed, beside the old weather-guage, which was a long bit of sea-weed, now as dry as a straw, that a daughter brought her who once went to the sea. It was not very long before Mrs. Cox took Constance and Alfred to the woodman's cottage again. The change was both felt and seen; a look of cleanly comfort gave a cheer to all within. Poor old Dorothy poured out her thankful heart in expression. And when at last Betty Cox said, in her

grave, pleasant way, "We must give our thanks to God; it is he who giveth us friends; old Dorothy stretched out her small thin arm towards the foot of her bed. "Look ye there," she said, pointing to the blue ribbon hanging beside the old, brown, smoke-dried sea-weed, "I know nought about weather now; my day for fine skies is gone; but the bit o' fine ribbon, my old eyes can see that! The sun catches a hold of it when he creeps in at the pane of the clean lattice there. How pleased he is, to be sure, with that rare bit o' blue! he'll lie dazzling upon it before he creeps other where. I look and see it glisten, and it minds me of all that's befell, until my poor, weary old heart, do climb up above by that rare bit o' blue, in thanks and praise unto Him who ordered it so."

Mrs. Cox's religious mind was not satisfied with the charity that befriended only the body; she soon proposed to Constance and Alfred to give their aged friends a Bible. "They could not read it," said Constance. "Cannot you read it to them? I am sure they would listen." Constance thought she could. So Constance and Alfred saved their money for a Bible, one of good print, for the cottage in the dell. And little Constance read to the old people. They loved the sound of her voice; this was all they thought of at first, but our Lord has said, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" and it was not long before they both felt

the power of the enlightening word. They longed for their little reader, and when she did come old Dorothy thought not of news, but was all for the Book. Her body was feebler than her aged husband's, but her mind was more ready, more alive to take in the bearing of all that was read. Betty Cox often took little Constance alone, when Alfred was out riding with his father, and the child read with increasing interest while the old people listened.

One day Betty Cox found for Constance, Jacob's dream of the ladder, and said, "You can read that." When Constance had read it, old Dorothy said, "That's pretty, very pretty reading, I am sure. But why didn't he go up when he had the main chance?" Constance did not understand, and the old woman repeated, "I say, my dear, why did he not get a foot on the ladder, and just climb up safe into heaven? Dear me! I would, instead of hobbling here!"

Constance looked at her nurse; but Betty Cox left her to answer. Old Nat thought it hard that the child should be questioned so close, and said, —

"There, hold your tongue, Dolly; and just think for yourself. How should the pretty dear know for why such things were that happened scores of years afore she was born?"

But Constance took courage, and said, "I don't

think Jacob could climb up that ladder, because it was only for angels."

"Very like," said Dolly; "yet I would have had a try; maybe they would just have lent him a hand to help him up there; for, you see, they must know 'tis the fitting thing to try when we do see a way."

"I know the way quite well," said little Constance.

"Ay, be like you do, dear. I'll answer for it, the angels some day will just have you up in their arms, and be off right away."

"No," said Constance, "not so; I know there is only one way, that is our Saviour Jesus Christ. I have learned the text where he says, 'I am the Way;' and 'him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' Those two texts are put together in my little red book."

"Be they, dear? But could it be He would take old lost ones like we?"

"Mamma says God loves you," answered Constance, "and sent us and Mercy to take care of you."

"Does she, dear? Does the Book tell her so?"

"Yes," answered Betty Cox; "it is written in the Book, 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.'"

Old Dorothy mused. "There, dear," she said, seeing Constance getting ready to go, "lay the

up under by the bit o' blue on the drawers there, where I can rest my eyes on it till you come again; it will mind me of comfort, for they be heavenly words!"

And so, by degrees, little Constance grew at home with the Bible and the old people. And the child and the Bible became to them like the first streak of the dawn, the sure promise of day. They listened and loved; they loved and believed; they believed and obeyed. Is it not for this that the aged poor are often retained in a lingering existence of feebleness and want, instead of ending life when vigor ends, that the quiet of life's evening may bring to their ears the record that God hath given us of eternal salvation through the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ? Let the little children be its messengers; they will read, again and again, the same blessed words of which our Lord has said, "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." It is the facts of Holy Scripture on which a child's trust reposes, and this is what will meet the feeble understanding of age. By this patient watering of the heart of the aged with the words of eternal life that very promise will be fulfilled, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

CHAPTER X.

THE sunshine of April had given place to cold east winds, which set in in the latter part of May; and the illness that followed proved as severe as the fever had been in the earlier month of the year. It was one of those seasons so fatal to earth, but wearing a different aspect in heaven. Benjamin Tovel had not taken his spring journey this year: he generally went after Easter, but the generous gift of money from Farmer Burton made it not necessary now, and a misgiving oppressed him. He saw not the face of his child, nor could he measure the food that she took, but he fancied she broke up more of her bread for Sharp, as though appetite failed; and when he took her little hand in his, it seemed melting away, so soft and so small, as if it never could grow into that blessing of earth, the hand of a woman. There was no lack of food now and the blind man opened his store and bought littl dainties sometimes, saying, "They will tempt th child!" He never asked what any thought of he never said, even to Widow Garson, "How does t little one look?" and though others saw, how co they tell the blind father that his last earthly

was fading away? Once little Sue said to him, "Be we going we travels this Easter-time, daddy?" and he answered, "No, little one; I think we can bide best at home: we don't want for money now;" and she answered, "We'll be glad of that, daddy; we don't like the great mill-wheel and the cold river-side; only we shan't see mammy's grave, and the little flowers we planted there will be all blooming gay." "We will go to mammy's grave," he answered; "but not for a little while yet."

Benjamin Tovel said no more, but the shadow fell over him: he felt the child was departing, and he could not see the little face, — could not tell what might be written there. One night he lay weeping; when morning rose, he took her hand in his; it was hot with fever; he stooped and kissed her burning cheek: little Sue awoke with the kiss and said, "Daddy, was that the bright angel?"

"Did you see an angel?" he asked.

"Yes; I thought I was sleeping by my own mammy's side in the pretty churchyard, and that bright angel came, and he took hold of my hand and kissed me while I did sleep, and that woke me. Is mammy woke, too?"

"No, little one, mammy sleeps there still; but the angel will come, and will wake up your own mammy, and baby brother, too."

"Shall I sleep a little more, daddy? I don't want any breakfast. I like sleep, it's so pretty!"

Benjamin Tovel said, "Sleep, little one; He who giveth it maketh it sweet to thee!" and he calmly prepared for the day with a spirit resigned, sad but not desolate; for those who daily walk on the confines of heaven feel no strangers there. He marked with deep feeling how the child's form of words changed. The "we" that was pressed into use on all occasions before was silent and gone; she had said "I" and "me" now, like one departing alone; and yet not alone, for angel forms were nigh: and is it not written, "He shall carry the lambs in his arms, and fold them in his bosom?" What companionship of earth can be like unto that? The strange sound of "I" and "me" did enter his heart as with the piercing of a sword, but the balm of life quickly flowed into the wound; and when he felt faint beneath the stroke, he would murmur, in the low tones he was wont, "We that have believed do enter into rest," or, "We believe that Jesus died and rose again."

He stepped into Widow Garson's; she was surprised at seeing him, as the child was always his ready messenger. Yet not surprised when he said, "The little one is ill." Widow Garson returned with him, she opened the shutter and knelt down by the child, who breathed softly, and smiled in her sleep.

"Shall I send Rachel for the doctor?" Widow Garson asked. "I fear he cannot save her; she has

been long marked for heaven, and her little form has looked almost as if vanishing away."

"It would be an easement to my mind," said Benjamin Tovel, "though she has heard the call, and none can make her stay."

The widow's children were heart-broken when they heard their mother's quiet words as she said, "Little Sue will not stay with us long. Rachel, you must go for the doctor; she is very ill to-day." Rachel went, and Sammy said, "Mammy, I cannot sweep my crossing to-day; I want to sit by little Sue:" for, though born in the same year, he always called her "little Sue."

In the afternoon the doctor came; he said the child must have been wasting away for some time, and no medicine could save. He was a kind man, and asked whether they had all they wanted: he seemed pleased at the warm bed-clothes and little comforts around, though he said it was a poor place, and he could wish them a better. In the evening little Sue was quite cheerful, but did not wish to get up; so they made her bed freshly, and laid her in it again, and Sammy sat by, and she said, "Have you been sweeping, Sammy?" and he answered, "No; I have been sitting by you." Then presently she said, "Sammy, you can't sweep up in heaven; the streets are all gold and quite clean up there!" and he answered, "God will give Sammy the works he wants him to do;" and, after considering, he

said, "I say, little Sue, mammy says we shall see Elijah the prophet, whom the ravens did feed, and I mean to tell him how dear old Smut brought us food."

"Shall we talk up in heaven?" asked little Sue.

"Mammy says," answered Sammy, "that I may tell the good prophet, and he will like to hear it."

"We shall sing," said little Sue; "but I can't sing without daddy; I must wait till he comes unless my own mammy can sing."

"They all sing in heaven," said Rachel; "the angels can sing; don't you know they came musicking down when our Lord Jesus was born?"

"He is the Good Shepherd," said little Sue. "Daddy, let's say we psalm;" and they repeated the sweet words, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;" and when the psalm was ended they sang the soul-reviving hymn, —

"The Lord my pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a shepherd's care;
His presence shall my wants supply,
And guard me with a watchful eye;
My noonday walks he shall attend,
And all my midnight hours defend.

"When in the sultry glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty mountain pant,
To fertile vales and dewy meads
My weary, wandering steps he leads,
Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow."

He did not sing the last verse; beneath the soothing strain little Sue had fallen asleep. She took less notice the next day; and the third, while they all watched around, she departed in sleep. "She is gone off like a bird," Widow Garson said gently; and truly as the little lark on the earth spreads his glad wings, springs upward, and is lost in the sky, so do the little children hasten heavenward when called to the Good Shepherd's embrace.

No one except the doctor had come in those few days; no one knew that sweet little life breathed its fragrance no more upon earth. Benjamin Tovel shed tears of thankfulness, as he felt that his golden store would enable him to fulfil little Sue's dream, and lay her by her own mammy's side, where both would awake when the angel descended to call the happy sleepers to arise from the grave. Leave was readily obtained from the clergyman; so a soft little bed, amidst daisy-covered turf, was dug, as near as might be to her own mammy's grave. Poor Sharp kept sorrowful watch beside the little sleeper, and would not lie down except where he could see her.

After service on the next Sunday morning, while Farmer Burton was waiting for his chaise, which he was obliged to have out when Mrs. Burton came with him, as she could not walk the great distance to their own parish-church, he saw the little grave, and asked whose child was dead. The sexton answered, "The child of the blind man, sir, Benjamin

Tovel." The kind fi u he felt as if a blow had been struck him. E own child had been saved, and now the blind i's was taken! And they had not been to see tl since that Christmas visit, though, as he said, and often they had thought about doing so.

He drove in the next day ith no object but this, and Mrs. Burton went with m. They found the little shop nearly cl he blind man not at work. He said, "Why uld I work now? It was for her that I toiled." They ent in and sat down by him; they found him calm, and even thankful. But he said the last cord v oosed that bound him to earth; he had only now to wait until his own call might come.

"No, no," said Farmer Burton; "you have life before you yet. You must take comfort, my friend, and live while you live. There is much yet to be done; you will find it out in ime, if you don't lose the spirit that has borne you up so long. I shall come and see you again, and find you busy at work. I know very well sorr w keep a man of your principles idle. But n r tell me, while I am here, how will you order for to rrow?"

"I have spoken for a li cart," said Benjamin Tovel, "and we can ride and walk by turns; it cannot be ordered any other way, because of the distance."

"That will not do," said Fa ; "I will

send in my light cart and man, then there need be no walking. Let all be done as may best ease your mind. You shall never want for the money while I or my wife or child are alive. I can answer for them." Then looking round for his wife, he followed her into the little chamber, which she had silently entered. The shutter was open, and a sunbeam poured in through the high casement, resting on the head of the child like a soft glory; her lips smiled in that deep sleep, and in her little hand Sammy had placed a blue violet. Looking on the child, Mrs. Burton wept as if the grief were her own. Benjamin Tovel, with the quick ear of the blind, heard her weeping, and it comforted him, as he afterwards said, that the tears of earthly mother were shed for his child; though, could her own mammy have seen her, she would have smiled, with the spirit of her child beside her, in heaven.

The next morning they took their leave of the earthly form of little Sue. Ben, Farmer Burton's man, had come with the light cart, and he slipped in softly beside them; the man, too, was there, who came to make all things ready, and, though used to such scenes, he wiped away a tear. The child lay as if ready for the angel's kiss of which she had dreamed, and the uplifting touch of his hand. Her blind father stooped, felt for the little fingers, took them, kissed them, and laying them down again, said, "God shall send his angels;" and then he turned

away, and Rachel and Sammy went with him, Ben to his horse in the light cart; but Widow G son and Sharp stayed and kept watch over all.

Then they set out, in sad yet peaceful process Sharp rode with his master beside the little coffi Farmer Burton's cart, and Widow Garson, Rac and Sammy, followed in the other. Many pa them, who said, or who thought, "There is a ch funeral;" but who could tell what was felt by little company of mourners, or what the love that had gathered around that child of the pc There is One, and only One, who knows the sorr of every heart, — he who asked, "Where have laid him?" And then it is written, "Jesus we

The cold winds had done their work for that son; they were gone. "He bringeth the winds of his treasures," it is written; and how often t prove the arrows pointed with love, gathering children home to heaven. Summer had come and the blind man in thankfulness inhaled the grance of fields, or heard from time to time the n of a bird not yet retired to the shady covert noon: even in the soft breeze that fanned his cheek he felt the breathing of blessing, and the s of Nature around him made him feel nearer heaven which his darling had entered. The yo man drove more gently than ever before; he w not so carefully have guided his way had he l

called to drive the noble of earth, as he did now that he bore with him the little dead cottage child.

As they went on their way Benjamin Tovel spoke of the hope that is laid up in heaven, and the hope that must answer to it here, — "Christ in you the hope of glory." He spoke of the life that triumphs over death for those whose trust is in the Saviour, "who died for our sins and rose again for our justification."

"Well," said the young man, "if I be not the better for the few tears I shed over that little angel, it wont be because I have made no resolution."

"That's right so far," said Benjamin Tovel; "but remember my words, — no good resolution ever held that was not bound fast with a prayer. We be wholly weakness ourselves, but prayer binds us to God, and he becomes our strength."

At the churchyard gate the little procession was formed. The blind man, led by his dog, followed as chief mourner; while Sharp's downcast look expressed the poor animal's sympathy. Then followed Widow Garson, with Rachel and Sammy, — Sammy had a band of black crape round his cap and around his coat-sleeve, but his sad little face was his deepest mourning for Sue. They wound through the churchyard, and the white-robed minister came out to meet them as the herald of life. They entered the church, — that church of memories to the blind man; but to the eyes of the understanding, when

divinely enlightened, a door is opened in heaven, and the glory and the gladness that are there blend their radiance with the sadness and the tears that are here, creating a rain-bow of promise on the dark cloud of death, mingling earth and heaven by the love that is light. The blind man saw not the scene now passing around him, but he knew well how many feet from the pathway lay the small space of green sod where they had made ready the resting-place for little Sue. But the Widow Garson saw all, and, to her surprise, saw their friends gathered there: Farmer Burton, with his wife by his side; Olivia, with Mrs. Brame; and Patience, in the Sunday mourning she had worn for her own little Peace. Michael had heard the tidings; he had borne them to Patience, and Patience had sent Jem to break, as gently as might be, to Miss Campbell the death of her little friend.

It was not until all was over that the blind man's courage gave way, and he said to Widow Garson, —

"I will stay here beside her; the nights are kindly warm now; how can I go back to the home where she is not?"

Then a voice, — it was the orphan Olivia's, — whose sweet tones he well remembered, recalling all the comfort he had himself given in the past, that same voice said, —

"My friend, our little Sue is not here: we must go up to heaven if we wish to be with her. But

must we not wait for the voice that will say in the right time to each one, 'Come up hither.'"

Alas! the empty home looked too desolate, and he answered again, —

"'The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?'" Then he felt his hand pressed in a woman's kindly hands, and a voice fell on his ear, —

"My father, you know a home will be ready for you! You must come there as soon as ever you be ready for it. Alice calls you grandfather, and my husband is always at work on a finish to all that never will be quite ended until you be come in." And a gush of life passed through the heart of the mourner, as he thought on the home that seemed so much like his own. And these kindly voices rose in the darkness like stars on his night, and recalled to the blind man that blessed assurance that goodness and mercy followed him still.

They feared that the dog might not be willing to leave the little grave by which he lay, and they thought, if he refused the string, it would arouse the grief of the mourner afresh. But Benjamin Tovel knew the dog, and spoke to him, and said, "Come, Sharp, we must go; you wont leave your poor master!" and the dog rose up and led him, and they went back to the town. Widow Garson lighted up a fire, and made tea for them all in Benjamin Tovel's own home, and she put all things in order, and they sat with him there, and sang hymns and con-

versed until the gloom lightened around him, and they left the mourner in peace.

There was a step in the churchyard that evening. The sun was setting, and the evening star led on the twilight; the summer dews fell, and all was hushed, save the song of the birds in the branches around. It was a laborer's footfall, known well from all other. as it treads flatly and firmly on the earth that it tills, Yet he trod softly, as reverently he drew near the little new-made grave, where the young child was laid. He stood awhile looking down on that small spot of earth, then up to the heavens, where the sunset glory still lingered. He looked once around him. — all was lonely and still; then, uncovering his head he bent his knees in prayer by the grave, giving thanks for the little child who had led him to pray. It was Lockwood, the thrasher. Even so it often is: the gentlest influence, when the Holy Spirit gives it power, will recall the wanderer to the embrace of the Eternal Father. Lockwood lingered there till the shadows fell, and the stars looked down from the sky; then he took his way home, become himself as a little child: "for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER XI.

OLIVIA drove into the town the next day to see her blind friend after his return to his desolate home. She did not drive up to the shop, but walked down the familiar lane. She stood at the door, the upper half of which was open; but, quick as the ear of the blind man was, he did not hear her light step. He was at his work again, twisting his willow withes alone, the dog only beside him; and, as he worked, he was murmuring to himself, in a voice so low that none but those who knew well both the voice and the words could have traced the meaning of the sounds: "Who are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" Olivia stood in silence. Sharp did not move, only looked at her. When the blind man had almost ended that vision of heaven, and came to the words, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," a tear rolled down his furrowed cheek, and he worked on in silence, as though he waited for strength to utter the last words. But when he continued silent, the dog rose and greeted Olivia, who spoke, and the blind man heard

her voice, and welcomed her in with a smile. She found him turning peacefully and thankfully to life again, — life, lonely and darkened so far as outward observation could see, but, invisibly to sight, illumined with a light and enriched with a companionship, all the relationships of earth could not equal or supply. The visit was full of comfort to Olivia, and cheered the heart of the mourner in his silent home.

Olivia afterwards saw Widow Garson and her children. Sammy was at home and silent; but no fear then crossed the heart of his mother or his friend for him. He would not take out his broom, which had been his daily business and pleasure before, but his mother thought this natural; she soon, however, began to feel that he would never go again. He sickened with the same low fever as little Sue. The fever had not been thought infectious, but in that little close room it probably proved so; or the same cause that led to its attack on little Sue might bring Sammy under its power; for, like her, he had long been a delicate child, — one who looked as if he could never struggle with life temporal, but must fade from earthly sight into that better life eternal. Like little Sue, he had known years of privation and cold, when food and clothing were scanty; and this weakens the strength, and often ends life in its childhood. It is so with countless children born of the poor; they tread their brief pathway with many in-

fant sorrows; but their race is early run, and we look up in trust that He whose compassions fail not will receive the helpless children whom poverty, or crime, slays by thousands.

Little Sammy had been brought up with all the care, and was nursed with all the tenderness a mother's love could bestow; and yet she could not grieve for him, she said. He had slept from his birth cradled on her arm, and she had not known how to think of him in the world alone. She had trusted that God would make all things work together for his good, however sad or hard to bear they might be at the time; and now she saw it was appointed that her child should breathe his last upon his mother's bosom, and be safely gathered to the mansions above, before she was called to enter there; and this came as an answer of peace to her earnest prayers, though not in the way she had expected. But death is only a shadow to those who walk with Christ, and they are made willing to follow him through darkness or through light. Like little Sue's, his illness was short and almost painless; the silver cord was soon loosed, and the golden bowl quickly broken. He murmured the dear names of earth and heaven: it was now, "the Good Shepherd," then "Mammy," and "little Sue," a threefold cord, two entwinings of which were in heaven, and they loosened the third that bound him to earth; and so, without fear his infant spirit

trod the shore whose light hides the departed from our earthly sight.

Widow Garson, who had hastened to write of joy, did not write now her tale of bereavement, but waited until Olivia might come. Indeed, the little boy had been taken, before she was aware how brief and gentle an illness would release him for heaven. It was nearly three weeks before Olivia was able to go in again. On her next visit to Ivy Lane she was ascending the long familiar staircase, when the woman who lived on the ground-floor, and had the care of letting the rooms of the house, opened her door and looked up the staircase.

"Do you want the Widow Garson, miss?" the woman asked. "She is not at home; will you please to step into my room?"

Olivia returned to the room below.

"Is Widow Garson out for the day?" Olivia asked.

"No, she has not stepped out long, but her girl went out with her, and I think it likely she may be taking her cup of tea with Master Tovel; she does that sometimes, for since the death of the child, 'tis terrible lonely for him in his blindness."

"Is Sammy with her?" asked Olivia.

"Oh, then you don't know!" the woman said kindly; "I was just afraid you might not; the poor child died last week."

"Sammy dead!" exclaimed Olivia, and she burst into tears.

She had come with thoughts full of the loss of one sweet child, and found the other was taken. The woman was affected at seeing her grief, and said, —

"Well, 'tis plain the rich friends don't make you slight the poor ones! But don't ye fret for the child, the mother herself can't be long here, and what then could the poor little weakling have done? If the ewe dies there be plenty will nourish the lambkin, but who would care to nurture up the poor weak child of a widow? He must have gone to the workhouse, and that would soon have been the end of him there! It was better by far he should die as he did in his own mother's arms, and never meet the rough world that would scarce have given him a shelter."

This well-meant consolation did not comfort Olivia. She, too, was left an orphan, and she had found a shelter. How deep and how true was the love that had shielded her, though beforehand it had itself seemed forbidding and cold! Might it not have been so with Sammy? Surely, she felt, when the children of the Father of heaven and earth need a refuge, he who opens all hearts at his pleasure, will provide them a home. And in the shock of this second loss, like the other unthought of beforehand, she felt as if all her childhood had held dear were departing. She wept on, unable to regain composure, and the poor woman, who had a worldly hardness of nature, was more softened by this gush of

tears than by any influence she had come under before. All Ivy Lane knew how the blind officer's child, that used to come backwards and forwards amongst them, had, when left alone in the world, been "made one of the family up at the great house," for so they expressed it; and now she grieved as if her own kindred were gone, because the poorest children in Ivy Lane had died, and "natural enough," the woman thought, "that they should die!" This unworldly love, this pure attachment in feeling, gave that poor hard-natured woman, as she afterwards said, the first notion she ever had of a love beyond her own understanding.

But now, having expended her best consolation on Olivia in vain, she did not know what more to say; yet greatly wishing to console her, and being naturally never long at a loss where words were required, she began again in a new strain of comfort.

"Now, I say, don't ye fret; why, there be plenty more children about in the town, scores and scores, as I say, too many by half; if your fancy lies that way you may soon find another; though I will say, — and who can know better than I? for the boy was born and bred in this house, and the little one in and out here almost like her home, — I never did see two children better natured than they; they always had a smile for you, however cross you might be, and would run on an errand as if you did them a favor. But then, don't ye know 'tis the best that be taken,

and likely they should be if they be wanted for heaven; and if God Almighty take a fancy to them, in course they must go, and it don't belong to them that wish them well to make a sorrow of that."

Strange as the woman's words sounded, they did comfort Olivia; the thought that the children she loved were taken and gone because they were wanted and wished for in heaven, gave an elevation to her feelings, that perhaps would not at that moment have been given so effectually by those who might have a far better knowledge of the good providence of God. Olivia recovered her composure, with a grateful smile at the woman for the effort she had made to cheer her; the woman felt a true pleasure at having done so, and said, "Shall I just run in and see, and fetch the poor woman here?"

"No, thank you," said Olivia: "I am better now, and can call in there; your kind words have done me good."

"That's more than ever I expected," said the woman; "I thought gentlefolks gave out good words to the poor, but had no notion they could take any back again from them."

"You make a great mistake in that," said Olivia; "I am sure I have received a great deal more comfort and happiness in my visits to Ivy Lane than I ever felt able to give."

"Well, I don't know," said the woman; "perhaps, after all, I don't see quite so clear to the bottom of

all things as I have considered that I did in my long life."

Olivia now gave her hand to the woman in a grateful farewell, but as she turned to the door the woman said, —

"Perhaps, if you should be this way again, you would step in for a few minutes. I don't say but what I do sometimes feel ignorant, and doubt whether I may be all right after all; and a little talk is pleasant if you can find a friend."

Olivia readily promised to call. She had never been asked into that room before, and this invitation, with the feeling it expressed, seemed given to cheer her in her fresh sorrow.

We need not try to tell how that little company of friends met, gathered in Benjamin Tovel's little home, but we can tell that they parted with smiles, — each had comforted the other. There is no surer way of gaining comfort ourselves than by the effort to comfort others. The light of consolation that we might not be able to receive in direct rays, we can see in reflection when it falls on another.

It was the summer evening when Olivia returned; she was glad to see no one on entering, and went straight to her room. The smile with which she had parted from the friends whose best hopes were above was gone, and as she thought of the children who had lived before her eyes like the twin joys of her life, her spirit failed her again. She heard a

knock at her door, and for the first time felt a wish not to meet at that moment her maternal friend, Mrs. Brame. It was not that Mrs. Brame would not be all kindness to her, but how could she understand her feeling such grief for the loss of two little children, nursed on poverty's scant bread, and never likely to be fitted for life? Yet she answered, "Come in," with the best courage she had. She did not look round, ashamed of her tears, but in a moment she felt it was not Mrs. Brame who had entered her room. She turned, and Lady Gertrude stood before her, who, seeing her grief, said, "My poor child, what is it? some fresh sorrow befallen?" Olivia threw herself into those tender arms that opened to receive her, and sobbing, said, "Sammy is dead!"

Lady Gertrude sat down with Olivia beside her, and did not leave her again until grief had calmed into peace. Lady Gertrude could well understand, in the lonely weight of care Olivia had borne through her earlier years, the sweetness that little Sue and Sammy had shed on her life; while the blind father of the one, and the widowed mother of the other, had been to her an instructor, and a strengthener of faith. There was blessing in the outpouring of sorrow to one who could comprehend sorrow's history, though in words but half told. And when she had ceased speaking, Lady Gertrude gently said, —

"These griefs are the chastening of your heavenly Father's love. It is not many whom he calls to such

early service as that to which he has called you. But it is good to bear his yoke in our youth; if any bear that yoke it is a proof that he is walking beside them, enabling them to lean on the help of his heavenly grace. And is not this far better and far happier than the easiest path without him?"

"Yes," answered Olivia. Her whole soul gave the response, and she was comforted.

Then Lady Gertrude said, "Now you must rest here in this easy-chair where I have been sitting. How sweet the twilight is by this open window, and the evening star inviting us to look above! I will send Brame with refreshments for you; you must try to take what she brings, and then lie down and sleep."

Mrs. Brame was anxiously watching, but had not gone in, finding her lady was there. On seeing Brame in waiting near the door, Lady Gertrude said, —

"Have you heard that the little boy is dead?"

Mrs. Brame answered, "No; but it is well for the child; only I am afraid she will vex herself, she had such a love for those children."

"I hope not," said Lady Gertrude; "it was natural she should grieve, but she is happier now. Do not let her talk much to-night. She says the poor widow looks as if sinking fast. I think you must go in to-morrow, but do not tell her until your return; it would be too much for her to go in again."

Olivia was quite ready for her dear old friend when she entered, and took her cordials, and Mrs. Brame was pleased at her not giving way to sorrow, and persuaded her to go at once to rest for the night.

As Lady Gertrude passed by the door after her visit to her sleeping children, she saw Mrs. Brame leaving Olivia's room.

"Is your child asleep?" asked Lady Gertrude, with a smile.

"Yes," she answered; "I waited until she was off, for she has wept too many tears in the years that are past, I am sure, to make them good for her now."

"Shall I go in?" said the Lady Gertrude.

Mrs. Brame looked pleased at this proposal. She went in first and drew back the curtains where Olivia was sleeping. The Lady Gertrude looked upon her in the sweet promise of her early youth, left friendless in the world by all who should have hastened to shelter her. But she had been given to them; they had welcomed the charge, and the broad shield of a tenderness that would not fail was over her now. Lady Gertrude knelt a moment beside her, in thankfulness to Him who intrusts his precious jewels to those whom he knows will cherish them, then kissed the fair brow, thinking it would not awake the slumber that seemed so silent and deep; but Olivia looked up. "Sleep on dear child," she said, "I came to look at you. May God ever bless you, and make you a blessing!" and under

that benediction she slept. And the tie that bound the orphaned girl to the Lady Gertrude's heart grew deeper and stronger, and Olivia's slumbers were sweetened by memories of the beautiful form that on the night of her sorrow bent over her in blessing.

CHAPTER XII.

CONSTANCE and Alfred heard the next day of the loss of their little friend Sammy. It was the first time the children had known the loss of a friend; they felt solemn and sad; but if for awhile all things looked less bright, it was only as the shadow of the angel's wing passing over them, bearing the happy spirit of little Sammy away. Olivia took them to make a visit to the cottage of Patience, and told them on their way of Patience preparing a home for the blind man and his dog. They knew well the story of the dog who saved the child in the river, and was nursed by Patience and Jem, and how faithful he was to his poor blind master. And the thought of the blind man and the dog both coming to live in Jem's cottage greatly interested them. Olivia, too, felt the comfort of a visit to Patience, who had already become to her as a friend; so they went all three together to the cottage. Benjamin Tovel had said to Olivia that he felt nothing could beguile him [illegible] the days of his absence from his own little Sue, [illegible] sweet innocent ways of the babes in that

ouse. And the thought of such a home for the blinc nan seemed to have lifted the weight of care for hin from the thankful heart of the Widow Garson. Sh felt also the grateful return which he made, that h would not leave his desolate home while she was stil spared, staying that he might be a comfort to her Widow Garson spoke of the future as one who truly felt that life here is not divided from life in heaven but is the same life flowing on, only passing for a moment through the shadows of the valley, then breaking forth afresh with immortal vigor in its course.

The children were to see the little room prepared for the blind man; and Olivia described to them how he did his work, how he twisted the willows in his blindness, with his dog watching beside him, and the care that Sharp took of the baskets, and then she said, —

"I will ask him if he will make his two first tle baskets, one for Consy and one for Alfy, to ca their own gifts in to poor old Dolly and Nat."

"But he does not know us," said Constance; "we must not ask for a basket. Could not we up our money and pay for them?"

"Yes," said Olivia, "you could easily do that; would not cost much, and he would be plea have an order as soon as he comes; it would him feel happier to sit down to his work and b ing his bread, and you could come and see makes them."

"Will he like me to come and read to him?" said Alfred, "as Consy does to old Dolly? I can read now!"

"Yes, I am sure he will," said Olivia; "it would make him happier than anything else you could do. The Bible makes darkness light for him."

"I know what I shall do," said little Alfred, "I shall take care of him as papa did of old Willy; grandmamma often tells me about that; and I shall keep my little basket and carry him things, and poor Sharp too, — I wish he were come!"

Olivia did not tell the children why Benjamin Tovel waited for a time before coming; it was enough for them to know of the loss of friends when it came. So in this happy converse they reached the cottage. They were full of interest about the home that Patience and Jem were making for the blind man and his faithful dog. Patience rejoiced in the feeling, and took them into the pleasant room they had prepared. The cheerful look it already wore, told that the hand of love had been there; it opened, like her own room, into the garden; sweet flowers bloomed about its window and beside the door; and though the blind man would not be able to see them, yet he was more keenly sensible to their fragrance than others were, and this supplied the place of sight to him. At length the children appeared satisfied, and Olivia sat down for quiet converse with Patience. When it was ended, and she rose to leave, the

children were not in sight. She looked around in vain; but turning again to the blind man's room, she saw them both seated there, each on a little stool they had found; and when she said, "Are you here all alone?" little Alfred answered, "We only came to sit here a little, and 'magine all about it." Dear child, would that all opening fancy were filled with imaginations bright and blessed as thine!

Mrs. Brame had been in to see Widow Garson, and on her return expressed her fear that the life that food and warmth had revived was now fast sinking. Hearing this, Lady Gertrude said she would go in and see the poor woman. It was not that she felt any doubt of Mrs. Brame's faithful care, nor of Olivia's solacing power, but Lady Gertrude said, —

"She is a mother, and it is right that a mother's heart should meet hers, and know her last wishes for the orphan child that she leaves."

Lady Gertrude took Olivia in with her, and sent her to cheer her blind friend, while she went alone to the widow's room. She found her sitting by her little fire, though the day was warm in the sunshine of summer. Widow Garson knew in a moment whose the presence must be that now entered her room; rising, she took the offered hand in both of hers, and warm tears of love and thankfulness were the welcome she gave. Then Lady Gertrude sent Rachel on to Benjamin Tovel's, to see her friend

Miss Campbell there; for she felt that, left alone with her, the widow would speak freely all she wished for her child.

Rachel ran delighted to the basket-maker's; she found Olivia seated in the small shop; and Rachel took little Sue's place, and gave the blind man the willow withes, which he received as was his wont, only you did not hear the words, often and tenderly repeated before, "Now, little one, quick!" when the child had turned to talk with Sharp, or to some other variety in her quiet life. Rachel was happy in sight of her friend; and she was used to listen to converse on all subjects engaging the interest of the older minds under whom her own had been trained.

The widow looked on the friend before her, and felt she could speak more freely all that was in her heart than she had ever done before, except with her blind neighbor Benjamin Tovel. When the Lady Gertrude spoke of her child, and invited her to tell her all her wishes, the poor widow replied, —

"I think the workhouse is best for her; she is not yet ten years old; she is tall of her age, and her strength is not grown to her size. I know in small places the work is apt to be heavy. People don't mean unkindness, but they do not measure the strength of a child. Her natural place is the workhouse, and I don't wish it otherwise. She will pick up more schooling, and have wholesome food, and early rest of a night, and grow up to a place of ser-

vice. She is a pleasant child, and will, I hope, make friends; and if I might trust to a kind word from you, my lady, to those under whom she is placed, the thought that you would know where they sent her to service, and that Miss Campbell would speak a word to keep her in mind of the way she should walk in; this is all I crave, and it will ease the only care that rests on my spirit."

The promise to watch over her child was given,—given with that tenderness that doubly endeared every gift, whether it were from the hand, or a promise from the lips. But the Lady Gertrude still lingered in that little upper room; and who could wonder? for she saw in that poor lonely widow, whom her hand had raised from sinking in want, one who was clothed in the white raiment and washed in the blood of the Lamb; purified and refined in the fire of tribulation, and waiting but the last gale of his love to loose the cable, weigh anchor, and sail from the shore to that better land, whose light beamed on her spirit even now, and where she, who had sat as a lonely widow on earth, would receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

When Mrs. Brame heard the poor widow's choice for her child to go and wait her age for service in the workhouse, she was silent at first, then said, "No doubt the poor woman is right; she has the wisdom of death in which to judge of life, and we do not see things in that light as yet." Many felt surprise that

Mrs. Brame should approve, — Mrs. Brame, who had always thought the workhouse next door to the prison in the loss of respectability. But old things were passed away with Mrs. Brame now. In past years her own opinion and her own way were all important to her, but she now felt a respect for the opinion and an interest in the wishes of others. She had become more swift to hear, more slow to speak. This was because instead of self, divine charity now reigned in her heart. Charity includes other graces, and chief of these humility. We may test the amount of our charity by the depth of our humility. Charity, then, is to be especially cultivated, because all other graces go with it. It was so with Mrs. Brame; charity had taken possession of her heart, and, try her in any way now, you would find the answering grace.

Olivia and Mrs. Brame now made frequent visits to Ivy Lane. Nothing seemed so much to interest Mrs. Brame as to sit quietly beside the dying woman, and listen to the expression of her faith and hope. Mrs. Brame said little, but her eye and her hand were quick and ready to supply all that could relieve. The little shop was often closed, and the blind man cheering the chamber; and the widow said, "No one could believe how it lifts you up above the body's death, to hear the very life of heaven breathing from his lips."

The neighbor who occupied the room that had been

Mrs. Brame's, had taken of late to step up to Widow Garson, to see, as she said, "if there were a hand's turn she could do for her." It is rare to find a poor woman who does not soften before sickness, and lend her best help in its aid. This poor woman had had no kind feeling for Widow Garson. She thought Widow Garson was getting all the notice because she had fostered an old woman's stray cat; but when she became better acquainted with her neighbor, a very different feeling awoke in her mind. She saw her patient suffering, her meek submission, and humble trust; her great thankfulness, too, for any little help her neighbors gave, or kind feeling they showed. "She seemed," the poor woman said, "to set as much store by the hand's turn I did her, as if she had no rich folks to enter her door." This poor woman often longed that the same thankful spirit which made all seem so pleasant to Widow Garson could dwell in her own discontented soul. And sometimes, when she left that upper chamber, she would shut her own door and kneel and pray for this. The neatness of the widow's room struck her also, with its restful look of comfort, and all kept by such a child as Rachel. She tried to keep her own in better order, and found that it helped her temper when her room looked tidy and clean, and her husband's temper, too, when he came home of an evening tired with the day's work. Then she thought within herself, "Now I have begun I will make a

finish. I will keep my rooms in order, and the children, and my own temper and tongue; I will be like that good woman, and see how it answers." But alas! this was easier said than done. She could not order the unruly wills and affections of her own heart, — could not even tame her tongue; and at length, quite discouraged, she told Widow Garson that evil had got such a mastery over her, that she could not bring it under, though she had passed her word that she would!

The dying woman smiled, and taking her neighbor's hand in both hers, said, "It is God who puts it into our hearts to try; but he knows we cannot do it of ourselves; it needs a mightier than we to put down evil within, and when we find we cannot do it, then he bids us cry unto him. Go to Jesus with all; go to him when you try, and when you don't try; when you conquer yourself, and when you fall; go always to him; tell him all. He will listen, and help, and pardon, and cleanse you; and sure as the day rises out of the night, so sure, if you hold on light will spring up within you, until it rises a heavenly day without fear of darkness, as it does through his goodness and mercy now for me."

"But wont he be angered when we slip into wrong?" asked the poor woman.

"Not angered," said the dying widow, "when he knows we do want in our hearts to do right. He is never angered with those who look to him for for-

giveness. He is grieved when we sin: he wept tears over sinners, and sure the least we can do is to weep for our sins. But if we be sorry and confess our sin, and look to him for forgiveness, he will take it all away, and teach us how to overcome it by looking unto him. There is no other way to heaven, only looking unto Jesus; that brings us comfort here, as well as leads us straight there."

One day the poor woman came in, leading her children, fresh-washed and clad; she brought them up to the bed and said, "Here, neighbor, I want you to give my poor babes your blessing. Maybe it will bide on them when you are safe from all harm."

"My blessing would be nothing of itself," said Widow Garson; "but as a prayer to God, it is much, for he does answer prayer. Never one prayer from any heart for his mercy and blessing that was ever crossed with denial. All things else may seem vain, but prayer never can be. If it come from our heart, and be asked for our Saviour's sake, it will go straight into his, and come back with a blessing. If it seem long in coming, wait for it; it will come; never one prayer lost its way, nor one answer from him; they be always coming and going, and the way always stands open. If you begin to count up the blessed answers, you will soon have to give in, for they will be more than ever you can reckon. Our Lord Jesus is just a friend always by us, and we

must take him for that, and live with him day and night, and our poor life will grow rich, and our sorrows find comfort, and all our sins will be clean lost and gone forever in his precious blood."

Then Widow Garson laid her hand on the head of those little children, and prayed for heavenly blessings upon them. That hand that had toiled for daily bread, that had labored for others, that had often been clasped in prayer. Its earthly work was all over; this was its last act, — to be lifted in blessing.

The sunrise may be bright, but the sunset glory excels. So the light that gathers around the dying Christian is often more glorious than the joy that awoke at his new and heavenly birth. When passed from our horizon a radiance still lingers, and the memory of the just becomes blessed. So it was with Widow Garson; all remembered her with love. The neighbor took her child to comfort her for a time. Then, when she could delay no longer, she took little Rachel to the workhouse, and cheered her up with many a promise to come and see her there. Benjamin Tovel was at work in his shop when Rachel came to wish him good-by. The little orphan girl was his last tie to Ivy Lane, and he felt much the parting with her.

"My dear child," he said, "your best Friend goes with you. When the workhouse door shuts on you, it shuts on him too. He will bide with you there. Say your prayers to his ear; he will be listening to

hear, and will answer each one in his own best way and time. And if you have to cry, my poor orphan, give your tears to him, too; whether you have done right or wrong, never cry to yourself alone, — think always of your Saviour; he knows what tears be; he will care for yours, even more than a mother. And if you do wrong, humble your spirit, confess it to God and to man; own to the fault, and you will be forgiven. There be some in this hard world that would sooner bear anything than say, "I am sorry;" that's pride in the heart; keep pride out of yours by the lowly meekness of the Holy Child Jesus. Remember pride drove the devil out of heaven, and pride will keep you out if you nurse it up. Forget yourself, young one, and think how best to do for others, and you will find a home and be happy in the workhouse. Think on your dear mother and read in her ways. I shall think on you daily, and lift up my prayer for heavenly blessings upon you."

So little Rachel entered the workhouse, and its door shut upon her.

The poor woman who had nursed the widow so kindly was willing to give Smut a home; but when he found his friends were gone he left the house too, no one knew when or where. Mrs. Brame heard of his departure unmoved, saying, "He will shift for himself, and soon find a home."

CHAPTER XIII.

JULY had ripened the corn, and the reapers were mustering their gang. The day was fixed for the sickle to be in, but the first sheaf had not fallen. When Farmer Smith trod his harvest-fields, the corn reached to his shoulders, — straw as well as corn was so abundant that year; and William's fields were waving gold. How beautiful the expanded surface when the breeze passing over waved it in undulations, like the swell of a lake; and the deep green of the foliage, with the glowing hue of the corn, made that rich contrast that fills the eye and rejoices every heart when harvest begins.

Joe was faithful to his promise; he came down before the day, and led on the reapers, who hailed him as king, and marched out to the field with green boughs waving in the wind, and delighted saw him toiling to keep on at their head, as each strong white-gloved hand held the sickle, and the long golden swathes fell; and they sang for Master Joe their first halloo largess when the sun had set in the sky, and the stars came out to listen as their deep

voices made the welkin ring echo to that joyous harvest-song.

August had come in, with its settled heat and still weather; no leaf stirred on the trees, no breeze rippled the brook, nor rumbling wagon as yet hasted to the field. Patience sat alone in her cottage; her children slept tired with the heat; she was at work, but her busy needle stopped every now and then, and she looked as one listening for some expected sound, but it came not, and she worked on again. Then she mused on the harvest, how fair the fields lay, and what people said of the land Master William had in hand. Not like to that he left; but he had been chief in making that what it was, and no doubt he would bring the other round after a bit; such a man for work and for business, and yet such a heart for goodness, too! How one mind could carry all, Patience wondered to think; but then she came to a conclusion, as she always did in her thoughts, and this conclusion was that goodness biggens the mind, for she said, "I see that in my mistress, there's room for all in her mind now, and one thing don't vex another as it used to do in years that are gone. To my thinking, her mind holds a hundred things in it for one that lodged there before, and yet they don't trouble one another, nor interfere as they used to do, one running ahead of the other to trouble and hurry, but all ordered so quiet as you might almost say each one had the

whole to itself. There can be no doubt, then, that goodness does biggen!" And Patience looked up and said: "Oh, that our poor hearts might grow larger by the harboring of this good Christian man, Benjamin Tovel!"

Then she started, and laid her work down. "There he be! that is old Dodman's step, drawing the tumbril, with Jem by the side. I am sure it is he." And Patience hastened out. There was nothing to be seen; but the slow, heavy step drew near, and the roll of the heavy wheel. Patience watched; then a horse's head appeared round the corner; it was old Dodman, and Jem, whip in hand, by his side, slow-pacing along, and here and there an end of furniture peered over the tumbril. Jem nodded cheerily, and they came slowly on. Patience lifted out the garden-stile, and waited beside it. The tumbril drew up, and there in the middle, on the soft bedding, sat Benjamin Tovel, and Sharp by his side.

"My father!" said Patience.

"Blessings on you!" he answered. "I am come to make my home with you, only one step from heaven!"

Patience took him into her room; and, seated in the arm chair, he asked: "Where be the babes?" And Patience answered, "If they dream you be come they wont be long in waking!"

Then she went out to Jem, and they took the furniture into the room made ready for it. Jem

went back to the farm with the horse and tumbril, getting home as early as he could to set things straight before night.

It was plain that Sharp remembered the place; he looked at each familiar spot, then went and lay down on the hearth-rug. Patience had her kettle boiling in her little back kitchen, for she said, "He will be spent with the journey." But Benjamin Tovel would not take anything until Jem came home to their evening meal; so she took up the children, and brought them down to him, and then went to begin putting things in order. Jem came home early; then they all went to supper; and that cheerfulness reigned which, having risen above sadness, has in its hallowed gentleness an elevating influence.

While at supper, to the surprise of Patience and Jem, Michael came in; for he had taken a sorrowful leave of his almost daily visits to the cottage, having let himself this harvest to the very farm where Benjamin Tovel was shepherd; he was to make his harvest there, and then take his place as one of the horsemen; and he lodged in the cottage of Lockwood the thrasher. He said they were scarce into harvest as yet, so his master had given him a chance of a few hours that day, and he did not value the distance for the comfort of seeing the place and old friends again. He was as pleased as a child to find Benjamin Tovel and the dog. Sharp remembered him at once, and Michael said he should make his

way home by his old master's, Farmer Burton's, for he was promised at all times a kind welcome there; and he would be thankful to hear that Master Tovel and the dog were safe in such a good homestead at last. They hastened their evening worship that Michael might be with them, and little Alice was allowed to sit up. Jem said they could have "Praise" sung as it should be now their friend was come home; and then, full of thankfulness, the blind man went to his pleasant room to rest. He did not sleep much, for the day had been one of deep feeling, but he lay thinking on that gracious Providence without which not a sparrow can fall. At that season of the year no night really darkens, only a soft shadow rests over Nature. He saw not the twilight as it deepened or brightened, but his ear caught the notes of the nested birds under the thatched eaves, and his spirit awoke with that first voice of home to the gladness of day.

With the morning all nature breathed freshness for him. He who had never known the confines of a town, except in those few years of his little shop in Ivy Lane, now felt invigorated as every sense expanded in the surroundings of the country. Even sight seemed in measure supplied, for the scenes of Nature were pictured on his mental eye, and the dear voices around him were all sounds of joy. Patience at her door saw his was open, and turned to see if he were ready for her; and as she looked

she saw his face raised upward, and heard him say, "This home on earth, and that home in heaven!"

The morning was still early when William, riding over to look at his father's reapers, stopped at the stile to inquire for Benjamin Tovel. He had come round by the lane on purpose, and stepped into his little room; and busy as he was, with two farms waiting on his hand, he found the few minutes in which to sit beside the blind man and give him a welcome.

Patience had been obliged to promise faithfully that she would let Alfred and Constance know when Benjamin Tovel and his dog were come; so Jem had to call round that morning, leaving word at the gamekeeper's lodge, the gamekeeper looking out of his window, for none were yet stirring when Jem's early footstep passed by. Jem did not work in the gang of reapers, though they often wished for him there, but took piece-work, on account of his sheep and other concerns which he best knew how to keep right for his master. So Jem stood alone in a sea of waving grain, and thought of his home, to which he felt as if an angel had come. And this feeling was natural; it gathered its heavenly glow from the past as well as the present, for all the memories of youth now pictured Old Willy to him in those exquisite hues that remembrance can paint, but which no artist can reflect on the canvas. And this feeling was true, for we may so appropriate the words

of an apostle. — Jem and Patience had not been "forgetful to entertain strangers," and they had "entertained angels unawares."

The gamekeeper faithfully reported at the Hall that Benjamin Tovel and the dog were safe at the cottage of Jem; and the servant who took the message faithfully reported the same. A shout of gladness received it; those young hearts were born to be a blessing to earth, overflowing with sympathy's glow! But what was now to be done? Had the Lady Gertrude been present, all the materials of school would have yielded to childhood's appeal; but Olivia was teaching that day, and she powerfully persuaded, and effectually prevailed, that the morning should be given to lessons and the afternoon spent in the cottage of Jem. Accordingly the work was done, with certain pauses between, not for words, but young imaginings that had left the present scene, where sums in addition, and letters in a copy-book, and various lesson-books, lay awaiting the leisure of the young wandering spirits, that returned with something like an out-of-breath sigh, to apply their best powers to the duties before them.

The afternoon came, and eager feet and happy faces set out for the visit to the cottage of Jem. It proved a happy time to arrive; Benjamin Tovel was only then seated, with willow withes around him, and Sharp at his side, exactly as Olivia had so often described. Little Alfred and Constance

were friends with him at once, delighted to watch the blind man at work, to give him their order, to hear how pretty their own little baskets would be, to receive the invitation to come and see him at work on them, and, in short, to listen to all the blind man would say. There was a charm to children in the way that he spoke; he had never known the child that did not give him its love; this gave a fresh confidence, strengthening his power. Sharp, too, though the life was gone from his eye, and a sad indifference to most things hung over the dog, yet the caresses of a child were dear to him still. He knew just the ways that most please a child; and Olivia began to fear that life would in future be rather too equally divided by the children between the great house and the cottage of Jem; while Patience looked on with a motherly smile, and little Alice ran behind Benjamin Tovel as he sat at his low work, and threw her little arms round his neck, and nestled her head by his, and said, "Grandfather!" and he answered, "Bless you, my pretty one!" and she ran contented away.

In a day or two Mr. and Mrs. Burton drove over, greatly pleased at the pleasant change for Benjamin Tovel. They found him at work on the little fancy baskets for Alfred and Constance; and Farmer Burton said, "Ah, that's well, my friend; work is Nature's order; and I believe that the idle will find they have never yet truly lived! But,

mind you, your work is to be no longer for bread. You have a son and daughter here, who have made you a home, and we shall look out to keep bread on the board; but that need not hinder you keeping yourself and others rich with your work; and if we cannot get you to us, we shall come over here every now and then to see how you are." So it was that a circle of affection, gladness, and blessing gathered around the blind man in the cottage of Jem.

A change now took place in this village rectory. The minister who had labored long and faithfully there was appointed to a higher office, and obliged to leave the people of his charge, who were greatly endeared to him. The tidings fell sorrowfully on all, but on none so acutely as on Mrs. Smith. She had never said much to him; her silent habit kept her from much speaking; but she always welcomed his coming with her best cheer, and no disastrous weather ever kept her from church. He had sometimes felt her constant silence, not knowing that she had said, when such a man entered their door she considered it their part to listen and learn.

It was a busy harvest-day when he called to take leave. All were out in the fields except Mrs. Smith; even Rose and Molly were gone to carry refreshments, — the harvest cakes, and the great cans of cold tea and milk, which the thirsty men found refresh them without increasing heat. So the Rector was alone with Mrs. Smith.

"I came for my farewell to-day," he said. Mrs. Smith made no answer. "I feel deeply leaving all my people, but none more than this house, Mrs. Smith."

"If ever house missed a step, sir, these doors will miss you!"

"There is a sadness and yet a comfort in being missed," he replied. "I have often wished I could have known more of your own mind, Mrs. Smith. I see you always at church, and all who need a friend feel you one, but you have never said much to me on the thoughts of your mind."

"I don't know, sir," said Mrs. Smith; "there be things, it seems to me, too great for words. There is seldom, if ever, a week over my head but what I open and read of our Saviour, how he stood by the bed, and took the fever hand, and bade the dying woman live; and I say to him then, if ever man trod in his steps, and was blessed by him to a like gift of healing body and soul, it was you, sir, that day when both were sinking in me. If I haven't troubled you with my poor words, I have spoke them out there, for the page is dim and blotted with tears, that if I didn't know the words I could scarce tell where they were."

What more could be said? The minister gave her his blessing; and when he was gone she hid her face and wept at the departing sound of that step

We must now make inquiry how Charley and Edith were getting on in their home.

"My dear children," said Mrs. Collins, "I cannot conceive why you keep up this desperate interest in that little lame boy, to the neglect, I am sure it must be, of your young friends well educated and rich."

"O mamma," said Charley, "if you only knew, you would see all those rich boys and girls don't want Edith and me. They have as many toys as we have, and it's all fuss with them; but little Me, mamma, do you know his poor mother says she really does think he would die if we were to forget him? You cannot think how he reads words of two syllables now! Sometimes I don't know a word, and he says, "O master, I know!"

"And, mamma," said Edith, "his poor mother says he is not like the same boy; she says he is as cheery as a bird in its nest on the tree. And when his poor father comes home tired from work, he will sit by the hour to listen to Me; and the poor woman says he never goes to the ale-house, but brings her all his money; and everything mends, she says, since Charley began teaching little Me."

And so it was. Life to little Me had been a dreary sitting still; all things passed him by and left him still lonely; but now the very letters of the alphabet had faces like friends; his book was his joy, ever growing more bright as he gathered fresh meaning from words put together. Charley

reigned in his heart as the chief of friends in the whole world to him.

"Now, father," he said, "I can read to you out of the Book, — not my spelling-book, father, but the real holy Bible. Now, you listen and see."

And the father came close, and sat by his boy, and leaned his head toward him, for he was growing deaf, and the little lame boy read: — "'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.' There, father, that was our Saviour."

"Bless him," said the father. "He was worse off than we."

And so the easiest lessons for a little child were the most touching words that ever fell from human lips; the words of Him who made the world and then died to redeem it.

Little Me, in his home, shone like a pale, gleaming star, whose shining wins the eye heavenward, and we look up in love. He had become a ministering child, indeed, in that once dreary home; no other voice there could read the Saviour's blessed name. This ministering child had been taught by others, — by Charley and Edith, who had become his best friends. It is in this way light kindles light: you may obtain many a bright flame from one without lessening its own shining.

Charley and Edith still found it difficult to learn obedience to their parents, because it had never been

required of them; they had been allowed to disobey, and did not, therefore, think it wrong. But by many a sweet lesson from Holy Scripture, and the voice of conscience within them, they learned, at length, that the question was not whether their parents compelled their obedience, but what God required of them. God had bid them obey, and his word could not be broken. And when, by patient teaching, they began at length to know and believe the love that God had to them, and became familiar with the history of our blessed Lord in the Bible, — that wondrous history that gathers hearts of every age and every class, winning and warning them by a love more than earthly, a love that transforms to its own divine image; then they loved him, and, loving him, tried to obey: "for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE new Rector came, and grave faces received him; a feeling seemed abroad as if he had wronged them, and taken a place he had no right to fill. Instead of discouraging, this only cheered him on, for, though young in the sacred office, he had from his youth learned the hearts of his fellow-men, and he valued more deeply those who so clung to their old pastor that they could not at once welcome the new. And, truly, two books must be studied by all who would not make their ministry of the Gospel of Christ of none effect, — the book that reveals the heart of God, and the book of human life, of which the mind of every man forms a page. Those who study only the first of these may be theologians, but they will not be ministers; those who study only the second may be philanthropists, but they cannot be pastors.

The minister who now entered on this charge was a man of very quiet manners, one whose silence was eloquent of sympathy, encouraging even the poorest to speak. In the free intercourse he held with all his

people in their homes, he seemed to feel his office was to be a listener as well as a speaker; in this way he learned much that enabled him to speak with good effect. Yet, with this quiet manner, and the repose that rested on him, he had a sympathy that compassed the world. In his daily ministries to his own people the heathen seemed never absent from his mind. In the quiet conversation of the day he would tell you of some one at the ends of the earth, on whom the true light had then shined, as naturally as if it had been of a cottage laborer next door; such a realizing power divine charity can impart, fulfilling even now our Saviour's own prayer, "That they all may be one."

The little list of village contributions to missions lay on his writing-table. It was not a large list, the names were but few, and, with the exception of the Hall, the sums very small. Why did it always lie on that table? Did it please him to see it, or did he have it there that he might pray for its enlargement?

When harvest was over he said, one day in a call which he made on Farmer and Mrs. Smith, "I am very desirous that each family in this parish should have a treasury for God in their home. Surely we cannot rest in the peaceful light of heavenly truth ourselves, if we be not trying to keep one little taper burning brightly in heathen darkness, to guide some poor lost wanderer into the pathway of life!"

Mr. and Mrs. Smith were silent. This was not encouraging, but the minister always concluded that silence led to consent, if it did not at once give it; and being impressed with the importance of the question, personally as well as relatively, he did not readily yield. So he said again, "You know, Mr. Smith, what it is to drop a seed into the ground, and have it spring up and grow you know not how; you only know you put the seed there. How often, if we had this little treasury-box I spoke of, we might drop in a bit of money that we should never miss, giving it in that small, secret way; and yet, what a harvest it would yield up one day, when there will be no more sowing of grain in the field, or precious seed in the souls of men! What do you say to this?"

"Well, sir, I consider it to be quite right as you say; but I think that treasury has been gathering here a long time, and giving out its store too."

"Has it really? You cheer me, indeed! But I did not see your names in the very small report sent up from this parish."

"That may be, sir, for all things don't get reported; and I should be for considering it full as well they should not. And I suppose you would not have come at the seed if you had not unlocked the granary door!"

All smiled at this, even Mrs. Smith, and the new minister never forgot what a vivid sunbeam could light up the face usually silent and grave; and he

was greatly cheered at finding this response in a farm-house that had made no declaration before of its ready mind. He had now fairly aroused Farmer Smith into conversation, a thing that was not easily done.

"I can't tell you of a box, sir, but I know there is a cup stands up in a corner-cupboard, and has stood there for years, growing rich, until a friend came in the spring inquiring, as you have done, and I believe it all went to the heathen you tell of. It is my wife farms that field, and you must make inquiry of her!"

"Mrs. Smith, I must come to you on behalf of this treasury."

"Well, sir, it stands in the cupboard, and you can have what it gathers whenever you find it convenient; but I am pretty sure there are other 'droppers' now, beside the one my husband made count of!"

The minister longed to see the cup; even the outside of that treasury would be cheering to him; but he waited until the right time came round for sending in the returns. Then he called at the farm, and said, "Mrs. Smith, I am come for the cup!"

Farmer Smith was within, and he looked on with a keen kindly eye. Mrs. Smith went to the cupboard and reached down the cup. The minister took it.

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"Do you know how much there is here? because you ought to know before I take it away."

"I don't know, sir," said Farmer Smith, "that I ever yet counted the seed I planted for a harvest. Why, then, reckon this?"

"Well, I will count it alone then. But, Mrs. Smith, may I have this one cup, which has so long gathered its store? I would drink my tea out of it when alone. I could never feel disheartened when this cup called up remembrance."

"Yes, sir, and welcome. You had best have a saucer, too."

"But, Mrs. Smith, will another cup answer as well for the cupboard, and grow as rich as this one?"

"You can best answer that, sir, I suppose, if we live until next year."

So the minister took the cup, and often, when he drank the cheering beverage, he remembered with encouragement the stream of that love which had long and silently filled that same cup as a treasury for God.

But now an unexpected trouble saddened the cottage of Jem. Poor Sharp had never held up his head cheerily since little Sue died. He had returned home with his master and been faithful to all; he had never refused food from any kind hand that offered it, though he would often turn away from his dish on the floor. He sometimes went out by himself, a thing he had never done, except that one

day, when, hunger-pressed, he followed Olivia to Mrs. Brame's room. When he went out he did not return until the next day, and no one knew where he went. Jem felt anxious about him, lest he should be found frequenting the woods, and be shot. Michael called in one day from his more distant farm-service, and he was troubled to see the wasted look of the dog.

"He seems so unsettled," Patience said; "yet he is fond of us all. The first thing he will do when he comes back from these tramps is to come straight up to me and lay his head in my lap, and if I say, 'Sharp, where have you been?' he lifts up to me such a pitiful eye it is almost more than I know how to bear; and then he will go and lie down by his master, and seem more satisfied like in his ways for a time."

Jem had tried to tempt him out, thinking he might cheer up if he got him more away, but the dog would not go; if Jem called him, he would go up to him, lick his hand, and return. The only way in which he would walk was with the string leading his master, except those times when he went out alone.

"I wonder where he goes?" said Michael. "I have half a guess that I know."

"So have I, too," said Patience; "but I would not say."

However, after this the dog did not leave for some time, but Michael was so interested and anxious to

ow, that he took the churchyard path on his way work and home again, and one morning, when e first frosty nights had set in, he saw poor Sharp retched by the grave of little Sue, with his head aid at rest on its grassy sod, cold and dead. Many grieved for the dog, and not least the children of the Hall and the cottage; and the blind man wept as for a friend. So closed the useful, and, until the death of little Sue, the happy life of the faithful dog Sharp. The kind Farmer Burton felt the loss of the dog, and, wishing to do something to cheer that little grave to the heart of the father, he raised a small white headstone, on which was written the name of little Sue, aged seven, and underneath, by her father's choice, the words, "God shall send his angels." And it greatly comforted Benjamin Tovel to have the sure word of promise written above the head of his sleeping child.

Alfred paid all the more attention to Benjamin Tovel now that he was bereft of his faithful dog. He often obtained leave to spend "only just one hour" with him, and this hour always seemed a very short one. He was generally left at the cottage to pay his visit alone; in this way the personal acquaintance increased, and the friendship grew stron Sometimes he talked with Benjamin Tovel while watched him at work; sometimes he sang with hi He took a lesson occasionally in making a little b ket himself; it was to be for his mother, and h

a great secret, and only done with the finest willows, and each difficult twist was done by the elder hand. And often litttle Alfred climbed on the chair beside the chest of drawers, to reach down the Bible and read aloud to his blind friend the chapters he most longed to hear. It was not easy to Alfred to pass by the stile without slipping off Snowberry to run in for a look, or waiting to hear if all were well with his friend. And little Alice made it her pleasure to lead him wherever he went. It is truly written, "Loving favor is better than silver or gold;" for could wealth have solaced the blind man like a touching love, such as this?

The bereavements that come to childhood, except when orphaned, or in rare cases of strong attachment, are like the fading of a spring-flower, when others will follow; but in older life departing joys bloom not again until heaven restores them. In both alike Divine Providence is seen: in the former endearing earth, our appointed sphere for a time; in the latter endearing heaven, as our entrance upon it draws near.

The favorite walk with Constance and Alfred was now to the wood, with its succession of charms, from the bright crimson fungi the children called "Red-cup Moss," and found with delight on the dead wood in winter, to the first blossom of the new year, and all that followed after. Then also they were not far from Mercy's home, and near to old Dolly and Na-

thaniel. Mrs. Cox never allowed Sally Millington to make any calls with the children without her, but they sometimes went alone with Sally to the wood. Little Maud at three years old was happy on her feet, and when tired, Sally Millington was always ready to carry her.

As they started one day this autumn for a walk, the game-keeper saw them pass by the lodge, and, looking out, said to Sally Millington, "There is a storm a lowering nigh; you must not go far." The children, as usual, were eager for the wood; and Sally Millington looking before her, and not behind, thought the blue sky quite safe. Mrs. Cox had charged her never to shelter under trees in a tempest; but Sally liked the wood, and saw no danger there. They had scarcely reached it when a storm burst overhead. A large oak tree, still holding its thick green foliage, was near, and Sally hurried with the children beneath it to find shelter from the down-pour of rain. The thunder rolled overhead; and little Maud asked, "Is God angry up in the sky?"

"No," answered Sally Millington; "it is only the black clouds clapping their big hands together, just like this;" and she clapped her hands to amuse little Maud.

"Why do they tap hands?" asked little Maud. "I don't like it."

"I don't know why," said Sally Millington, "un-

less they be glad that it rains; folks down here cannot tell what pleases those up there."

"Yes, Sally, they can," said Constance; "I know a great many things that make glad up in heaven."

"I suppose the Bible tells," said Sally.

"Yes. I wonder you don't want to know, Sally."

"I should not mind if I did," answered Sally.

"Shall I ask mamma to let you come and read sometimes with us? then you would know," said Constance.

"I don't know," said Sally. "I should be shamefaced with my lady."

At this moment a terrible clap burst overhead; little Maud shuddered, and all felt afraid; still the tree kept the children dry, and Sally Millington stayed. She remembered the charge she had had, but she said to herself, "I never knew such things happen as people hurt under a tree. I don't believe it, nor see why it should be!"

At this moment an active little old woman came on through the rain, her gown pinned over her black bonnet, just showing her small face between. Seeing Sally Millington and the children under the tree, she stopped, saying, "Why, woman, you be not safe there for one moment! Come out of the tree, and hie home with me."

"We are dry here," said Sally, "and if we go out the children will get soaked with the rain."

"Ye shan't bide there," said the old woman, "if I

take a stick to ye all. The next stroke of the lightning may shiver ye dead! Out with ye, I say! a dash of rain is no damage, except to fine clothes, and what be that to the life of the children? There is my little old place outside the wood, — keep the path and run for it. Do ye hear what I say?"

Sally Millington looked at the distance, at the rain, and stood still.

"I'll be as good as my word," said the old woman, still standing in the pitiless rain, and, with a strength that astonished and admonished Sally Millington, she broke down a stick of formidable size. "I'll drive ye like sheep if ye wont go without: ye be worse silly than they; ye may have the babe dead in your arms with the next flash from the sky!" And, raising the stick, she hurried under the tree. Little Maud shrieked with terror, and Constance cried, "Go, go, Sally! go!" Sally wrapped her gown over the child, and made a rush, with Constance and Alfred at her side, and the old woman after them. They soon saw a little place of four walls with thatch over it; the door was quickly opened by the active old woman, and they were safe within. Then another peal crashed along the sky; the old woman went back a few steps in the rain. "'Twas mighty near," she said; "maybe shivered a tree." Sally looked round from the door, and saw the old woman stand unmoved in the rain, with hands lifted to heaven. The lightning shaft

had shivered the oak tree, but the precious lives it had covered were in safety through her. Sally Millington, struck by the old woman's attitude, ran out and saw the blasted forest tree. Overpowered with thankfulness and terror, Sally sank on her knees, but no words could she say. "There, come now, if ye be thankful ye will be a better woman: come in to the pretty babes; they be all of a cry. Come, come, little dears, ye be safe, with old Peggy; and we must be thankful. Let us see how we can order to get you all dry."

"Could you light up a little fire?" said Sally, in her distress.

"Now, ye see, girl, that's just what no mortal can do; the old chimney is so low it lets the foul weather in. I never can light a stick when the rain drives or the snow; but we must be thankful there's a roof overhead!"

"What shall I do?" said Sally, taking off the children's wet clothes.

"Here, see, girl; here be two old rags of blankets, — wrap the pretty dears up in them; they be clean as hands can make them; and here is my Sunday cloak for the boy."

Sally took off little Maud's hat, pelisse, and boots, and wrapped her quite up in a blanket, and put her into the clean little bed. Then wrapping up Constance in the other old blanket, and Alfred in the old woman's best threadbare cloak, she hung the wet

clothes up to dry. Sally could scarcely stand on her feet from terror and distress. Constance and Alfred were both old enough to understand that they had, perhaps, but just escaped death, as explained by old Peggy, and they trembled with the alarm of all that had passed. Old Peggy knelt down and rubbed little Alfred's feet through a scant bit of flannel she had in her drawer, and Sally, seeing this, did the same for Constance through the old blanket, until a glow crept up their shivering little frames, and the while she did so old Peggy said, "We must be thankful."

"Can you have a fire when it is very cold indeed?" at last asked little Alfred.

"Not when the rain drives, nor the snow neither," answered old Peggy. "Don't you see it patters down all the soot? and the rain driving too, there be no chance for the flame if you set it alight. But we must be thankful!"

"What thankful for?" asked little Alfred, who did not quite see the connection.

"Oh, my pretty dears! there was One better than we on whom the tempest did blow, and no shelter for he!"

"I know the little text about that," said Constance.

"Speak it up then," said old Peggy; "I love the sound of the dear words, though I couldn't read a letter, — no, not if you would crown me!"

Constance, having gathered courage in her visits to old Dolly said softly, "'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.'"

"Ah," said old Peggy, with an evident feeling of relief, "He is far above all that. Then he did suffer for poor sinners like we! Sure we must be thankful!"

Wheels were heard driving quickly, and Sally looked out. It was Mr. Clifford. "How came you here?" he said. "I have been everywhere for you. Where are the children?" and he stood in the midst.

"Papa! papa!" shouted Alfred and Constance, "we were almost dead, but this good old woman saved us."

Sally trembled as they spoke, but the children were unconscious that blame rested with her.

"Dead!" said Mr. Clifford: "where is Maud?"

"There, papa; she must be asleep."

Mr. Clifford took up the little bundle on the bed; it was the child asleep. "My good woman," he said, "let me take them as they are; their mother knows not they are safe: you shall have your wraps before night. But tell me, was there danger?"

"We must be thankful," answered old Peggy; "the lightning bolt rift the tree, but we must be thankful they were fled."

"Were they under a tree?" said Mr. Clifford,

the terrible fear having struck his own mind before.

"I will show you," said old Peggy, "and ye will be thankful to the good God, who held the blast in his hand until they were fled."

"Did you warn them away?" asked Mr. Clifford.

"Yes, yes," said old Peggy; "the poor things had no notion that danger was nigh, so I was forced to drive them out sharp: but that's all over now."

"You have saved them!" said Mr. Clifford. "I will get them home. Take the child," he said to Sally, as he lifted Alfred and Constance, one under each arm. But little Maud awakening, cried, on finding Sally's intention to carry her out. "No, no! May not go!"

"Here, give me the pretty babe," said old Peggy; "she knows I *dreve* her to shelter; she will go free with me."

Little Maud went to old Peggy, nothing daunted by the memory of the great stick; but when they got to the door she clung round her neck, saying, "Will they tap hands any more?"

"Bless ye, my darling!" said old Peggy, who did not understand the inquiry. "Here's a fine carriage to ride in, and we must be thankful."

The carriage was soon out of sight. Old Peggy went back to her cheerless abode to give humble thanks for the deliverance, then sat down contented and thankful.

On arriving at home the whole house was listening, and answered the loud hall-door bell. "All safe!" said Mr. Clifford as he handed them in, in their rags of old wrappers; but he looked deadly pale. Mrs. Cox had a warm fire and all appliances necessary for wet, shivering children. They were soon in their nursery, and their mother with them. There was no stopping the eager outpouring. "They will not sleep until they have told us," said Betty Cox. So, wrapped in warm flannels, they were allowed to tell, while little Maud already slumbered warm in her own nurse's lap. Unconscious of the blame that attached to Sally Millington, they told all that had passed. Sally Millington had hid away, and did not appear. Betty Cox's quiet brow flushed red, then her whole face turned white; their mother heard in silence, and, when the first outpouring was spent, they were soothed into sleep. She stayed with them until she saw each exhausted child sleeping, then pressed the faithful nurse's hand, but spoke not a word, and left her to watch. The servants were waiting, in their strong feeling, near the nurseries, having heard from the coachman reports of the tree. Lady Gertrude said, as she passed them, "We can only give thanks!" Then calling Mackenzie, she said to her, "Will you see to Sally Millington? let her be taken care of, but tell her not to go to the nurseries until she has leave." She then passed on in calmness, though under that shock.

In the afternoon the storm passed away, and the sun broke forth in splendor, every dewy surface reflecting its rays. The children were awake; having bread and milk instead of their lost dinner, to their great satisfaction, alone with Betty Cox by the nursery fire: but when they asked, "Where is Sally?" Mrs. Cox replied, "Sally has done very wrong, and must not come here to-day."

"She did not know we should be killed," said Constance; "only the old woman knew, and Sally thought we should be wet: but we all ran so fast for fear of that great stick."

"I would not have run," said Alfred, "only I thought we ought to do what the kind old woman said."

"Cox," said Constance, "that good old woman's name is Peggy. I think that name is very pretty. And little Maud cried when Sally took her, but she went quite good to old Peggy."

And so, in talk with their quiet and quieting nurse, the children were happy, and all took their food warm and well. Their grandmamma, too, had seen them, and was recovering the shock, assuring herself that each precious child was safe. Olivia, on whom she leaned in a tender dependence, was with her; and Mr. Clifford and Lady Gertrude were gone to the cottage. He wished her not to go, and said, "You have passed through enough; let me go to-day, and to-morrow I will take you." But she answered, "Let me go; I cannot rest until I have

seen their deliverer." He did not show her the tree, and, not knowing where it stood, she knew not that they passed it. Arrived at the cottage, if four low brick walls can be worthy that name, they went in together.

"There, now," said old Peggy, "did ye think I should be cold? I could sleep huddled up without warmth for one night. But will ye be seated? I fear my poor old chairs be no place for ye out of a downy carriage like that; but we must be thankful."

Lady Gertrude sat down unable to speak, "her rapt soul sitting in her eyes;" she longed to embrace her children's deliverer, but she sat there in silence.

"Tell me all?" said Mr. Clifford.

The old woman gave a short, simple account of her getting them in, without any mention of the stick, which now stood by the fire, drying there, in readiness to compel her little kettle to boil.

"I am afraid you had trouble in getting the young woman in?" Mr. Clifford said.

"Trouble!" said old Peggy; "I never conjure up that; if I can't order one way I just turn another; so I just *dreve* them in. Right good earnest is best when danger bides nigh; and we must be thankful."

"Was that the stick?" said Mr. Clifford, as he saw the fresh-broken wood; "had you strength to break that?"

"Ay, ay!" said old Peggy, "and use it too, if

need be; the bigness scared them, you see, and the young woman ran; but a bit of a switch I might have had to lay on. And the pretty babe never feared me one winch the more; she came to me as free, her little arms hung about me, until I would have given the world to have taken her home; but we must be thankful."

"You shall come and see them," said Lady Gertrude, at length finding words, "and it will be their delight to take care of you, and add every comfort they can to your home."

"I don't want for nothing," said the contented old Peggy; "only now I have seen them my old eyes will long, for they be those sweet babes whom Heaven made for our love. I have little grandchildren, and their prattle comes more cheery to me than any mirth of this world, let it be what it may. My son is good to me; I never had parish pay, though I buried my good husband some twenty year gone: fifty year back I boiled my pot under this tree, that now drips on the thatch and rots it away; I never counted he would do such mischief to me; but he breaks off the wind and the drive of the snow, and we must be thankful." It was evident that thankfulness was the chorus of life to old Peggy; and, uttered with the feeling into which her voice always deepened as she said it, it had a most touching pathos, destitute as she seemed of all the comforts of life.

"We have brought back the old wraps to cover up some new!" said Mr. Clifford, as he laid a large bundle on her little table, and they left old Peggy to unwrap new blankets in astonishment.

Lady Gertrude did not ask for the tree; she felt unable for more; but as they passed it, standing scathed in the now glistening sunshine, a blackbird had perched on it, pouring forth his lay. She turned at the song, saw the blasted tree, spoke not, but sank on the supporting arm by her side.

Of all that passed after, our tale may not linger at this point to tell. It was long before Sally Millington was admitted to the nursery again. Lady Gertrude often had her with her; and felt assured, at length, that her sorrow was deep and sincere. Sally Millington had now felt the need of a better spirit than her own, and when that need is felt the supply waits to meet it.

"I knew it would be so," said Mrs. Brame to Olivia. "That's the way with my lady; she always has with her that living water of truth. I mean the truth that is heavenly; and if she can't turn you to the right mind before, when once you can get no further she will draw it round you, and heap up those coals of fire that you told me meant love, until she melts down your hardness as soft as a child. I say she does it, but you know well I mean it is done by His Spirit, who works blessing through her. I have seen her compass that, ay,

countless times. I used in my hardness to say to myself, she shall never get the better of me, I who nursed her from her birth! But she did, and I bless her every day that I live, ay, almost every hour, and Him who gave her the power!"

But another tempest fell that no guardian could shield from, — a tempest that bore death on its wings to poor sailors at sea. Ted the sailor-boy had been home again, — man as he was all still called him "boy;" all welcomed his coming as the bird to the home-tree, and when he left again a loss was felt around, — as the sense of silent songs when birds of passage take wing. He was welcomed too at the Hall, and was one of Alfred's great friends. But the storm came at last; over his mother's soul it had long hung like a little cloud at sea, keeping still closer to her heart the son she was always giving up to Heaven.

The fatal tidings were first known by Joe. Ted ship had gone down; a few hands had escaped in boat, but his name was not amongst them. J hastened home the next day. Never before ha sad errand called him there. How to enter with tale was more than he knew; he walked round dear old place, hoping he might meet William; instead of William he saw his father, who stoo silent surprise. "Dear father," he said, "I a welcome comer. I have heavy tidings with Farmer Smith sat down on the handle of a p and said calmly, "What is it, my son?"

"Ted's ship is gone down, and he is not amongst the saved!"

"God's will be done!" said Farmer Smith; "and I do believe there is but one death for him, and that over now, he dwells with the blessed!" But having said this, Farmer Smith bowed his white head and wept. Joe stood by his side. At length the old man looked up, saying, "Your poor mother? What! have you not seen her yet, Joe?"

"No, father."

"You had better find her. You know she takes things best plain. You will happen of her within. I left her only now."

Joe crossed the farm-yard, and went in at the back-door; his mother heard the step, and a certainty fell with his footfall that it bore heavy news. She did not rise to meet him, but laid down her needle, and held out her hand as he entered, saying only, "My son!"

Joe sat down on the low chimney-stool at her side; it was Ted's favorite place, but he thought not of that. "Mother," he said, "you heard the wind blow, and you know all I can tell."

"I have long thought it," she answered, calmly; "so, then, it's over now?"

"Well, mother, the sea could not drown the better life of our Ted?" At the sound of the dear name the mother wept.

Joe lingered at home, for tears were falling around.

And at the Hall little Alfred first felt in his young heart a tempest at sea.

Before Joe had left home a letter arrived. It bore an inscription in the familiar hand, so often cheering all hearts before, of their lost sailor-boy, and both homes met to read it:—

"DEAR Father and Mother, and William, and all, — I don't know well how to write; perhaps I had better try. We have a dead storm here at sea, the ship can't hold out long. She has borne up so bravely it will be vexing for those who may see her go down. I can scarce write with hard pumping, — my hand shakes the pen. Don't you be thinking I am frightened; I am noways afraid of the rough arms of the old sea. 'Tis the best death for a sailor, and I shall sleep as sweet, mother, as in the grassy church-yard. Tell Will I have often thought on what he put to me before I came out to sea; and I am not afraid but what my spirit will rise up to the good God who loved it, and washed it from its sins in his precious blood. Don't you fret, mother; the sea will give up its dead. I send a lock of my hair. There's a chance the boat may live. Our men are all calm. We have not had a scoffer among them. I have often read with them from my little Bible. There is no tempest in heaven, mother; and you know it is written 'There shall be no more sea.' My last fond love to all

One kiss, my mother! Till we meet again, think happy thoughts of your sailor-boy TED."

Who shall tell how often the letter was blotted with tears; or pressed to the mother's lips, between which and her sailor-boy's kiss rolled the waves of the fathomless sea! Oh, well was it once said: "Our sorrows, while here, seem as if graven with a pen of iron and lead in the rock forever; but one wave of the ocean of Love which flows on that better shore will efface them all like the faintest impression on sands."

CHAPTER XV.

WE must now let three years pass over in silence, and then take a farewell glimpse of our Ministering Children.

The seasons had passed over Benjamin Tovel in happy repose. His days were no longer each one marked distinctly by toil, like the rising and falling tide of the laboring sea; but they glided swiftly and calm, like the clear rippling brook that flowed a few paces from Jem's cottage-door. The love and reverence that Jem and Patience felt for him, deepened as time advanced. The discipline of life and the love of the Spirit had purified and ennobled the character of Benjamin Tovel. The infirmities that often obscure divine grace appeared already subdued and buried in him. His mind reflected the beauty of earth, and his heart was the home of all the charities of life. Who would refuse sorrow's pathway, when even here it can prepare the soul for that grace which enables it to reflect the Saviour's image so clear?

His work was now a gentle labor, on which no

hard necessity hung; he often sang as he worked, and the touching tones of his song told of one whose harp had often been hung on the willows beside Affliction's deep waters, while he sat down and wept; but who had now left behind him the captivity in which Sorrow's chains can bind us, and was beginning the triumph song within sight of his Home.

Patience had the joy of another little son, and when Jem was asked by inquiring friends, "What name have you chosen?" he made answer, "I strike hard to have it called Benjamin." And so the child was christened Benjamin, and was called "Ben;" and he loved the nursing arms of the blind man better than his cradle. "He wholly spoils me for work," Benjamin Tovel would say; and Patience answered, with a smile, "I know who wholly spoils him!" Benjamin Tovel was the children's delight; as we often see with children, they will take most to those whose gentleness has the depth and repose that past sorrow imparts. They were with him at all times, and he never wearied of them; they learned at his side, or on his knee, more in one happy year than the toil of many teachers can impart in far more. And, best of all, they seemed to drink into his spirit, too; for obedience and love prevailed in that home: and when he missed them awhile, and did not know why, you might hear his voice calling, "Alice, my pretty one!"

"Willy," or "Ben," for he never said "little;" that term of dear remembrance slept silent and sweet in the grave of little Sue.

Sometimes, when he sat on the settle by the door, amidst the fragrant blossoms that clustered there, with Ben on his knee and a child on each side, Patience, working within, would hear him murmuring low, "He setteth the solitary in families, and maketh him households like a flock of sheep." When a beggar asked aid in passing by the cottage, he would always rise and go to the stile, and, sitting on it, would speak to the poor traveller on the way. He would tell them of the door of mercy and love opened by Him who died on the cross for our sins, and then ascended above, that each poor lost wanderer might in him find the way to pardon and heaven. He would tell them not to fear to venture, for beggars never yet were denied, if they came now, while the invitation was given by the heavenly King. When he found them ready to listen, he would ask Patience for a handful of food, which she would bring out in full measure, and often a little milk when her store was not spent; and they sat on the bank, and the blind man would tell them some history from the Bible, in the same simple, winning way in which he told children: and sometimes getting warm with the theme, he took no note that other steps passing by had stopped on their way. Or sometimes, when he had done, Alfred

would take hold of his hand, and he would say, "Is it you, my young master? and I did not hear!" He always would have a few pence in his pocket, as he said, "for his friends;" and Patience never let the little stock run out: but if ever the blind passed he would ask them to rest, and the small coin given them was sure to be silver. And he would ask the name of the dog that led them; and whether they had a child; and give them his blessing when they went on their way. He was a rich man now, in every sense of the word, — rich in heavenly and earthly treasure. Farmer Burton would never receive the excuse that the last quarter's money was not spent when he brought another. He would say, "Poor man! look what his sorrows have been; let us keep what cheer we can round him in his life's quiet evening."

He looked much older than he was, for he was yet far from sixty, though his hair was turning white and all called him old; but by reason of this his age seemed to stand still, and a long ripened autumn glowed round Benjamin Tovel.

On Sunday little Alice always led him to church, and the village people left a sheltered place for him. All would turn a kindly look when they saw him come, let in by the child. Alfred never felt quite at rest in his place until he had made sure that the blind man was present, though he was never absent, and often first of all. To Olivia he was the one link

that bound her childhood in the town to her youth at the Hall; she could distinguish the deep tones of his voice when it rose in the psalm or the hymn, which, when sung a few times, he would remember and join in; and her own voice rose freer and happier for blending with his, — the only friend of her childhood now left her on earth, except little Rachel in the workhouse. And now we must take farewell of Jem's happy cottage, and make a visit of retrospective inquiry to the workhouse of the town.

The workhouse which Rachel had entered was the same to which Patience was sent when a child; but the people who held office there were no longer the same. Rachel attended the workhouse school, and being a quick, attentive child, obedient and obliging in her ways, she generally kept out of trouble. There were but few young women in the house; the inmates were chiefly old people and children. In consequence of this, Rachel sometimes went into the laundry to work, and very often waited on the old and bedridden women. This last work of nursing was familiar to her; it reminded her of her home and her dear mother. She did everything so kindly and patiently, that the poor old people welcomed her amongst them; and those out of bed and those able to sit about the large room had her continually in call, doing or undoing something for them. It was soon seen that Rachel was a favorite wherever her work might be: this called forth some

envy and ill-will. Poor little Rachel did not always remember that the only safe place, in trouble or out of it, is keeping near to the Saviour. Sometimes she indulged pride at doing things well; sometimes she felt sullen because she was not commended; at other times she did wrong, or forgot or neglected orders, and then made excuses instead of owning her fault; but, sooner or later, the holy lessons she had learned from her infancy came back on her heart; she confessed her fault, grew more humble, prayed more earnestly, and was happy again.

There was in the workhouse an old woman, who had been there ten years: her name was Grubb. She was a widow, and went by the familiar name of Goody Grubb. She had lost her children in their youth; her husband had died also in consumption, and not being able to provide for herself, she had taken refuge in the workhouse. She had herself been weakly when young, but as age advanced she had grown stronger, and was now one of the strongest of the old women there. One trial of the workhouse is, that you must bear with all the variety of tempers, dispositions, and characters gathered around you in the same room. This variety is perhaps interesting to a visitor, but often the sorest trial to those who live there. Goody Grubb always considered it her calling in life to set other people to rights. She spent her days in giving good advice, unasked, undesired, and seldom followed. But

it did not appear to strike her that her advice was unwelcome, and therefore might be better suspended for a time. Her shrill voice would be constantly heard pointing out people's faults, and what she thought the right way to mend them. Sometimes the old people got up a gossiping hubbub to drown it, but as in the pauses it always began again, like the dreary whistle of the wind in the chimney when the household hearth is still, a confusion of tongues generally prevailed, and the old people were often called to order by the interference of the matron. On these occasions Goody Grubb always put on an air of triumph, as though the matron had come in solely to support her; quite unconscious that her well-meant, ill-timed advice, was the provoking cause of the disorder that prevailed.

The sorrow of this was made greater because Goody Grubb really valued her Bible, and wished to do and to say the thing that was right. But pride reigned in her heart, and she always took it for granted that she was herself in the right, and all who opposed her in the wrong. She would sit for hours with her Bible before her, stiff and stern, as if braced up to give way to no one. She would at any moment have read aloud to them all, and given her own interpretation to the words that she read; but this no one would allow; and as to looking around her for any little kindly office she could do for those older or more feeble, this never ap-

peared to present itself to her mind. It was difficult to know how she could read much to herself in the unhappy atmosphere of that one great room, where, by sorrowful necessity, the old women were crowded together, with no young life to soften and brighten the wintry barrenness of helpless and ignorant age.

When first little Rachel saw Goody Grubb sitting upright before her large Bible, the sight of the open Bible quite affected the child: it reminded her of her mother. The old woman's keen eye noticed this; she felt pleased with the child, and talked with her, and gave her good advice. This made Rachel think much of her, and wish to please her. But very soon Goody Grubb began to warn her against having anything to do, more than she could help, with the other old people, telling her they were hardened old souls, and not fit associates for her. And when Rachel was doing any little voluntary service for them, Goody Grubb would call her off to something else, with a voice of authority. She thought it was for the child's good, but the other old women were hurt, and contention broke out again. Poor little Rachel soon found herself in great difficulty; it was plain she must disobey Goody Grubb, who read her Bible and gave good advice, or she must give up being kind to all the other people. How she wished she could know what her own mother would have told her to do! There was no voice

to speak to the little workhouse girl; but she remembered her mother always told every trouble to the Saviour, that ever-present Friend, and then the thing always came right in the end: so she prayed in the words of the psalm, as her mother had taught her: "Teach me, O Lord, to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God. Show me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee." Then she thought she would begin the New Testament, reading as many verses as she could slowly and thoughtfully every day, until she should come to one that would guide her in the way. When, after some days, she reached the end of the 5th chapter, her eyes brightened as she read, "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." "Then I must be good to them all," thought little Rachel; "the Saviour says so: and I cannot be good unless I am kind, because I am only a poor child, and so I must try to help them. Goody Grubb could teach them the Bible and religion if they would let her, but I can only wait on them." Not only wait on them; look again, little Rachel. Rachel did look again and read, "Pray for them." "I will try," said little Rachel to herself, "and then perhaps Goody Grubb will grow kinder, and they will mind what she says, and we shall be happy."

When Rachel tried to pray for others, she found it

easier and happier work than when she had prayed only for herself, and she felt more ready to wait on all around. The next time she was sent up to the old women, most of them looked dismal or cross for the want of a little interest in their unvarying existence. One poor old woman in her restlessness had got her bed-clothes in confusion; Rachel put them straight, and shook up the pillow, and the old woman went off to sleep. Another, who knitted in bed, had let her ball roll away, and it had tangled itself round the feet of two old women, who were tottering along in different directions. Rachel rescued the old women and the ball, and the poor woman in bed was rejoiced to find her worsted not broken. Another said her poor foot was so cold it had no feeling in it. Little Rachel had often rubbed her mother's, and began to try her best for the poor cold foot. Goody Grubb looked at the ministering child, and felt that she was dear to the old women; a bad feeling rose in her heart, and she was tempted to call her away: but Goody Grubb was a Christian, though heavenly love in her soul was overgrown with earthly pride; so she thought better of her purpose, and left Rachel to follow her own pleasant way, the way she had been learning from the Bible. Things went on better than usual that day, and the matron said, "What have you done to keep the old folks quiet?" Rachel said nothing, but she thought to herself, "I have only done what

the Saviour said, — tried to be good to them, and prayed that they might be kind."

The next time that Rachel was sent up she took with her a little book that had been given her; it was a very touching little history. She went to the bedside of the poor, restless old woman, and began to interest her with it. The old woman was not deaf, so she read in a low voice. "Read up there! we can't hear," said an old woman by the fire. Rachel looked at Goody Grubb, who took no notice. "Read up, child!" said another old woman; so Rachel read louder. The little history was much approved. "Don't 'stry the book, child," said one old woman, "I will hear it again some day." But Goody Grubb said, "It could not be to profit if those liked it who would not hear the Bible."

Another day, when Rachel was amongst the old women, they asked her to find another story for them. Rachel had not got another, but she said she knew where to find beautiful stories in the Bible. Some would not consent to the Bible, but others approved, and finally Rachel found there would be worse trouble if she did not begin, so she read the history of Joseph. At first there was some interruption, but the thrilling tale won its own way, and they all listened. Goody Grubb said nothing, but though it was the Bible she did not look pleased, because she knew they would not listen to her.

Rachel in this quiet way made herself very useful,

and could keep the old people happier than any one else: it was by forgetting herself and thinking of them,—it was by following in the way the Saviour's words taught her, and asking his help and blessing. The third winter she was in the workhouse she was thought old enough for a place of service, and would have been sent to one, with the Lady Gertrude's approval, but the winter was severe, and many of the old people fell ill. Rachel was so great a favorite and help with them, that the matron wished to keep her. Lady Gertrude, and Olivia, and Benjamin Tovel, and her friend in Ivy Lane, were all pleased at such a reason for her staying a little longer in the workhouse. They had all remembered her with kindness; Olivia went every few months to see her; and sometimes Rachel went to see the poor woman in Ivy Lane for a day, where many were kind to her.

Goody Grubb was at length taken ill with rheumatic fever. She was very impatient and restless under the pain; it was difficult, and sometimes impossible, to do anything to please her; but Rachel had had a long training in patience: she would try a second time as kindly as the first, and sometimes sat quite still by the bed when she could do nothing else. One day, when the poor old woman was tossing and groaning, Rachel said, "I wish I could do anything to make you better!"

"You can't, child; you know that; there is none

but God can, and it don't seem as if he would. I have been the only one reading the Bible, and yet there is not one who suffers like me!"

Rachel well remembered the text that so often comforted her mother, and said, in a low voice, "Is not that text for you, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth?'"

The words fell like balm on the soul of the poor troubled woman. The pride that had grown up and hid her own sinfulness from her sight had also hid the Saviour; but the voice of the child, applying the well-remembered words to her, came like a whisper of love from above, and she said, "Read me that chapter."

"Where is it?" asked Rachel.

"The 12th chapter of Hebrews," said Goody Grubb. Rachel found it and read; and as she read the silence increased, and many listened to the words speaking peace by Jesus Christ. From that day Goody Grubb became more patient and easy to please, and she still rested on that one word, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth?" She often asked Rachel now to read to her, but she always took that verse for her pillow of rest. And now, as the warmth of the heavenly words glowed on her soul, she felt how cold her own heart had been. Now that she was humbled in spirit, she began to see things in the light of Truth, not the false light of Pride: she lay quiet in her little bed, and thought

on these things. The more she looked back on the past, the more she felt that she had hardened her heart in its pride against all. There is nothing that separates us so far from God or from man as our pride. Goody Grubb felt this now; there was not a creature who cared for her except little Rachel · indeed, she felt sure that all the old women were glad she was out of their way in her bed, and would feel it a good riddance if she were to die. There was a desolate feeling in this; but this was not the worst: poor Goody Grubb's own heart felt dark, no light from heaven came shining in comfort. She could no longer find any self-satisfaction, and all other comfort seemed dead; for it is written, "God beholdeth the proud afar off," too far for them to see him, or feel the joy of His salvation. Only that one little text, that Rachel had said, was a leaf from the Tree of Life to Goody Grubb, it kept her from sinking. At length her burdened mind felt compelled to speak, to raise, if only a little, the weight that lay heavy. "Rachel," she said, "those old women always listen when you read the Bible to me, but they never would hear from me so much as a word." Rachel did not know what to say.

"Tell me, child, if you know their meaning in it; if ever they said a word to you about it; I charge you to tell me." Rachel was close to the little bed, and she answered, not without fear, "They did say one day, 'It is all very well, child, for you to read

up for our pleasure, but we wont have that old Goody drive us on with her crook: we have made up our minds we'll have nothing from her!'"

"Child," said Goody Grubb, "I wish I never might leave this sick-bed. I don't know how to sit amongst them all. I know they all hate me, and I do the wrong thing when I only mean the right."

Rachel was greatly surprised and affected to hear Goody Grubb speak like this. She thought she had been quite above all things, except giving good advice and reproof. She had sometimes wondered whether to sit upright, and look through spectacles and find fault, was what all good people would come to at last; and she had felt a great respect for Goody Grubb.

"Oh, don't die!" said little Rachel. "I love you indeed; and think that they would, if you could forgive them, and"—

"What, child?"

Poor little Rachel did not know what to say, but, full of fear, she added, "be kind."

The words of the Bible were familiar to Goody Grubb, and that little sentence, "and be kind," reminded her of the injunction, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." This looked so unlike all her life had been, that Goody Grubb forgot the sins of others in the sense of her own while the last words, "as God for Christ's sake

hath forgiven you," brought to her spirit the balm of forgiveness.

Goody Grubb did recover, and had to leave her little bed and sit up in the room. No one welcomed her back; only little Rachel was glad, and made her seat comfortable with a pillow behind, and put her great Bible before her, as it always used to be. At the sight of the Bible Goody Grubb wept.

"She be grown wholly childish!" one old woman said to another.

"Nought so good," answered the other; "her be only weak; her will be preaching again in no time, you'll see!"

Rachel looked greatly distressed. Goody Grubb had heard all. Oh, the effort it is to humble ourselves when we have walked in pride before others! but Goody Grubb felt it must be now or never; so she said, —

"'Tis I want to be preached to; I am just the chief of sinners. I can see and feel it now, for all my pride is laid low. You don't want to fear my reading again; I can't see the blessed words of the Book, for I have cried night and day over the hard words I have said, and the hard heart I have had, till my eyes are that dim I shall never read again. I can only pray God in his mercy to find me a corner to creep in, and to wash us all in his blood, that we may rest in heaven."

The old women all listened, and one or two who

couldn't hear leaned over to others, and said, "What be her saying?" More than one wiped away a tear, and one whom the others called "Old Spirity," and who had been the first in opposing Goody Grubb, said, "There, there! don't ye take on! ye are just a bit weak, but your eyes are good enough still, and will soon be peering again; and if ye don't preach, ye shall read up now and then!"

But Goody Grubb was quite right; her eyesight had failed; it was no use to rub her glasses, and try them both ways; the words looked in confusion, and she had to shut the Book up again. Oh, how she longed for those blessed words now, like waters in a desert soil, but longed to see them in vain! And as she sat meekly there, with the large Bible shut beside her, doing nothing, saying nothing, only sometimes letting fall a quiet tear, the old women would stop in their gossiping talk, and look kindly at her, and say, "There! wouldn't we listen if you could read a bit? and don't ye hear, we haven't spoken one bad word to-day?" Or they would say, "Don't ye fret; when the child comes she shall read up a bit; it will comfort you up, and do us all good, maybe."

Rachel was to go out to service in the spring; it vexed all the old people, but troubled no heart so greatly as that of poor Goody Grubb. Rachel was the only comfort she had on earth, and what could she do without the ministering child? But there is

a verse that says, "He hath torn, and he will heal; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." A letter came to the workhouse master, inquiring for one Alethia Grubb, a widow, without children living, or any near relations. A little property had fallen in, and she was, if still living, the heir. Goody Grubb well remembered her relation, and the little home he had made, into possession of which she had now come. Her first request was to take Rachel with her, promising to be to her as a mother. Rachel was delighted at her aged friend's fortune, and happy to go with her. All her kind friends approved, and the arrangement was made. But before they left, Goody Grubb said to the matron, "I should like to give the old folks a tea-drinking." The matron was pleased, and said, "If Mrs. Grubb liked to pay for the material, she would make them plum-cake." So they all drank tea, the last evening together; and Mrs. Grubb shook hands with them all the next morning, and they parted good friends, with kind wishes to speed her on her new way; and she set out with Rachel in the coach. It was strange to her, after her long workhouse life, to be at large in the world, and feel herself rich; and before night they reached the pretty little house, with a knocker on the door, and a little green in front, with palings and a gate. And Widow Grubb and Rachel both found a home.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHARLEY and Edith had never grown weary in their care for little Me and his home. The rill of heavenly charity that flowed through their young hearts had its rise in the eternal hills, therefore it flowed freshly with ever new supplies, and deepened its channel and widened its bed: for Charley and Edith, both in heart and mind, had a freer expansion and power than children whose central point is Self. If we grow weary in labors of love, it is because we are carrying them on with our natural powers alone, not supplied from that better life whose measure is infinite. That better life, even on earth, has no meridian from which it declines; its day is eternal, and brightens forever.

Charley's delight was to teach Me a little of all he knew himself, and the crippled boy made rapid progress, learning being the sole occupation of his time; while the exercise of teaching to Me all he learned himself not only gave Charley a steadiness of purpose, but doubly impressed his acquirements upon his own mind. Me kept even pace with Char-

ley in arithmetic, and showed a great taste for drawing. He learned to write a good hand; in short, it was evident he would follow his young teacher wherever he led him in the pursuit of useful knowledge. But far better still was Me's love for his Bible; no other enticements of books ever led him to neglect that best companion and friend. And when the winter evenings drew in, his father sat by the fire close to Me's chair, which was now a bigger chair than before, for the cripple had grown; the mother took her work, and Me read from the Bible. Who that looked in on them could have supposed them the same who, a few years before, knew no comfort in home? One evening Me said to his father, —

"Now, father, you might learn to read. There is my very first book, as good almost as new. I really will teach you."

"How you talk, child!" said the father.

"But, father, you must learn; and mother, too."

"There, now!" said the mother. "I know my letters already. I don't know who wouldn't, so often as I have heard them discoursed with."

"See, father, there's mother knows hers already! Just hand me my books. . . . No, wheel me up to them. Now, father, come: 'A, B, C;' say that after me."

"There!" said the father, when the first lesson

was ended, "I never thought to know a letter, and I can tell over seven! I shall hold my head high!"

"Not for that, father," said Me; "you wont think such great things of knowledge when you come to know more. But only think, father, what a blessing when we all sit round and read! Meggie is getting on so fast with our young lady!"

And so they grew in knowledge, not of the wisdom of this world, but of that better knowledge that maketh wise the simple. Taught by the Divine Spirit who enlightens the soul, they learned to know and believe the love God had to them, and to rejoice more in that love "than one that findeth great spoil."

Charley and Edith had now entered on their last year of home lessons. Charley had for some time received instruction from a tutor for a few hours in the day, but he never liked to prepare any lesson without his faithful governess and friend. After this year he was to enter life at a public school; and Edith was to be sent to learn accomplishments with girls of her own age, and more of the style of life than Mrs. Collins feared would be learned with her excellent governess at home; though at the same time Mrs. Collins did not fail to express her value for Miss Mansfield, and her sense of the success of her educational engagement. But to Jane the happy issue in Charley and Edith was the sweetest recompense earth could bestow.

A brother of Mrs. Collins returned this year from

abroad, and came on a visit to his sister's family. He was a man of much benevolence and intelligence, and had been in a large way of business abroad. Hearing often of "Me," he one day asked his sister, —

"Who is this 'Me' the children talk so much of?'

"A poor crippled lad," replied Mrs. Collins: "the children have taken a desperate fancy to him; there is not one of their rich friends they think half so much of."

"Where is he?" asked Mr. Mildney.

"He lives some distance off, on the Common: it keeps the children in exercise, and shows a good disposition; so I have not put a stop to the intercourse."

"I should think it has had a happy influence," said Mr. Mildney. "I am charmed with the pleasant ways of the children, always thoughtful for others."

"They have a first-rate governess," replied Mrs. Collins; "a woman who thoroughly understands her work. I have not had a complaint since she entered the house. Before she came I was worried out of my life with women who could not rule the children. I leave things to her, and this fancy for the lame boy began, I think, with her."

When Charley and Edith came in, about to start for their walk, Mr. Mildney said, —

"If you are going to see your poor crippled friend Me, I should like to go with you."

"O uncle, will you really go?" asked Edith.

"Yes! yes!" shouted Charley. "Come, uncle! come!"

Miss Mansfield wished to retire from the party, thinking the uncle and children should make their visit alone; but she was compelled to go by all voices at once. Even Mrs. Collins said, "I am sure you ought to go, Miss Mansfield, for the credit is yours. So they started, the children on each side of their uncle talking both at once, giving him the history of all things that bore remotely or nearly on the life of Me. The benevolent uncle was both surprised and delighted, not having expected to find this stir of active love in his relative's home. With a child holding each hand he walked steadily on, unable to show Miss Mansfield the courtesy of more than a word; but she, in quiet happiness, walked on by their side. The visit was as interesting, prosperous, and joyous as could be expected. Mr. Mildney was surprised at the lad's proficiency: he was some years older than Charley, but small and delicate from his injury and close confinement.

On their homeward walk Mr. Mildney proposed a plan to Charley and Edith. He offered to provide the means for building, in the approaching spring, a room to be attached to the cottage, in which Me might gather a little school, teaching the children of

the straggling cottages on the Common, to whom no instruction was given. The generous uncle would provide the cost if Charley undertook to watch over the work; and if he and Edith would lay by their weekly allowance to provide the necessary school materials when the building was finished. In this way Me would be provided with a maintenance for life, and grow up, they might reasonably hope, into the most useful member of society on the whole extent of the heath. Who shall describe the shouts, the leaps, that Charley gave; or the very dance for joy of Edith's happy step! Charley's cap tossed high with a "hurrah" that almost rang back again to Me within his cottage-door; and went quite through the benevolent heart of his uncle, whose eyes suffused with tears of truest charity, at finding how the music of its words thrilled responsively the very frames of the children at his side. How sweet to Jane Mansfield looked her patient toil, in which no parental heart had shared her hopes or fears, her difficulties and disappointments! This, at least, had had in this instance the advantage, that it left her influence undivided, and stronger, because it gathered all its aid from a source invisible but infinite. She felt, as she heard those shouts of joy, as if they would echo in her soul for evermore. This was Charley's first great realized achievement, to have helped a helpless boy on to a point of honorable independence. Would classic laurels or a

merchant-prince's crown of wealth ever make his spirit vibrate with a keener, purer joy? This, his earliest triumph, was not for himself: it was life-long success accomplished for another; and might it not be well believed that he who won and wore the joy of a first triumph for another, would redeem the happy pledge, and win and wear no self-absorbing trophies in the race of life?

On reaching the house Miss Mansfield retired to her room. Charley, cap in hand, rushed into the drawing-room, followed by Edith; while Mr. Mildney, in his calmness, brought up the rear.

"O mamma!" shouted Charley, at his mother's sofa.

"O mamma!" exclaimed Edith, "what do you think?"

"My dear children, you distract me! I cannot have this uproar. I thought you had been learning better manners of late; and before your uncle, too!"

"I am very sorry, mamma," said Charley, drawing up a chair, and sitting down quietly, "I did quite forget just to-day."

"Could you listen, mamma, if I tell you quite quietly?" and Edith smoothed down her haste as well as she could, saying, "May we tell you, mamma?"

"No; I cannot have you go into such extravagances. Go, Edith, and take your things off. I cannot hear anything in an uproar."

The children retired, the rapture was over,— unintentionally extinguished. But they found their own governess, whose spirit glowed in the same joy, and she soon rekindled theirs in a quieter gladness.

"We used to have these outbreaks when Miss Mansfield first came," said Mrs. Collins. "I could not understand it, having never seen anything like it before; but of late the children had acquired a more correct behavior: only very likely this crippled boy has drawn a horse with four legs, or proved a sum in addition, or something else as remarkable. I always know they have been there when they lose self-possession."

Mr. Mildney looked grave; he was standing up by the fire, but made no reply. He thought it not the time to speak, when the maternal censure had been passed; but he could well understand how the poor crippled boy had been the one loadstone to draw out their young sympathies, which, otherwise objectless and barren, would have wasted away. And he knew the value of this generous gush of feeling expended on the poor boy, whose only visible return was the love of his heart and the progress he made.

In the evening the children came down quieted, with their usual considerate and pleasant behavior. No further request was made by them to tell their happy tale, for fear of distressing their mother; but in the evening Charley went close to his father, and said,—

"I want very much to tell you something, papa."

Mr. Collins listened patiently, and approved, only saying, —

"I hope, Charley, when the time comes, you will care as much to make your own fortune as you now do this poor lad's."

"The care for another's welfare is the best preparation for the true pursuit of his own," said the benevolent uncle.

"I am sure, brother, I wonder you ever made a fortune with your views of social duties," said Mr. Collins.

Mr. Mildney smiled, saying, —

"It is a quiet fact that I have; and I never feared that my larger vessel would be more likely to founder because now and then it took a little boat in tow, until it had rigged enough canvas for sail."

Edith, encouraged by Charley's success, made a very gentle attempt with her mamma, and succeeded in imparting the fact; as to the joy of the fact, it may be a question how much penetrated with it.

"Where is Master Charley?" inquired Mrs. Collins the next morning at breakfast.

"I don't know," said the servant. "He went out early into the garden; he often does that."

"Edith, where is your brother?"

"I don't know, mamma."

"Miss Mansfield, where can Charley be? I have allowed him to breakfast with us while his uncle is here, and now he is not ready."

"I am very sorry," said Miss Mansfield. "I have not the least idea where he is."

"Master Charley is here," said the servant, opening the door.

Charley entered in perfect breakfast order. The party had only then assembled, so that he could hardly be called late, but his glowing cheeks and shortened breath told of some haste.

"Where have you been, Charley?" inquired Mrs. Collins.

"I just ran up to the Common, mamma, to tell Me about the school-room. You cannot think how glad he was. His mother had not been able to dress him, so he was lying in bed; and he threw his arms round my neck and cried. I said, 'Why do you cry, Me? I am sure you can do it, and be the best master anywhere round.' And what do you think he said, uncle?"

"That he was crying for joy, I dare say."

"Yes, uncle; how easily you guessed! He said he was crying for joy, because he could now see a way how to support his poor father and mother when they were grown old, instead of lying a helpless burden upon them; he said, 'I shall be the happiest man that lives, next to you, Master Charley.' He always puts me at the top of the tree."

"Take care you don't get a fall then, Charley," said his father.

"O papa, if I did, it would be into poor Me's

arms! They would be stretched out, I am sure, let him run what risk he might!"

Mr. Mildney saw the work in safe hands before he left. Its progress was delightful to the children. At length all was finished, — a day of great rejoicing; Charley and Edith had saved up their money, not asking any help. At breakfast, on the day of completion, Charley said, —

"My plate stands uneven. Dear me! here's a note under it!" Edith took up her plate.

"And here is one for me!" she said.

They broke the seals, and each little packet held a five-pound note, with an inscription on the paper, "To help in fitting up the new school-room, with love from papa and mamma." The children gave very gentle, but very heartfelt, expression to their joy and surprise.

A day was fixed to celebrate the event. Charley wrote to his uncle, now resident in England, to be quite sure and come on that day. The school-room was decorated with wreaths of flowers, and the children of the neighborhood invited, that they might see the new room, and the master ready and able to teach them. Mr. Mildney, when he arrived, provided Me with a new suit of clothes, making the poor lad, with his intelligent face, an object of still greater admiration to his father and mother; and this new clothing made him more highly thought of as a schoolmaster.

"Now Fenty, dear Fenty, do make us good things for our feast on the Common!" And Mrs. Fenyman set all her kitchen to work, and went up herself, and as many of the servants as could go; and Mr. and Mrs. Collins were both present at tea. The evening was delightful; and Me started in life as a schoolmaster to the little children around.

Soon after this, Miss Mansfield left her pupils for their fresh start in life. Charley went to a public school, to throw his early awakened energies into the pursuits awaiting him there; and Edith to her school. But Miss Mansfield and her pupils continued warm friends. Me was still an unbroken interest, awaking freshly on each return home; and Mr. Mildney became as a second father to Edith and Charley.

Jane Mansfield returned to her home, and enjoyed the lengthened intercourse with all her family and personal friends. Her second sister was happily engaged in the work of instruction, and the third was in full usefulness at home. Jane was thinking of re-entering on the responsible and all-important work, when she one morning received a note in a business hand not known to her. She said, playfully, before opening: "Perhaps this may be an offer of an engagement, that may save me the anxiety of inquiry." Then blushed on reading it, and folded it up. Alone with her mother, she opened it again. It was one of Samson Smith's unexpressive notes, stating, in few words, that he had received an offer of partnership

from his uncle, which would enable him to marry with every prospect of a sufficient income, and asking the gift of her hand. Mrs. Mansfield looked in silence at her daughter. "Impossible!" said Jane. "I could not give up all to coolness like that!" Yet it cost her a painful effort, for she had always felt the weight and the worth of his character. Her mother was silent, her father regretted, but Jane wrote a denial.

On the second evening after, a note was brought to her; she was surprised at seeing the same writing on an unposted letter. She opened, and read:—

"DEAR MISS MANSFIELD,—On receiving your letter I suspended my acceptance of my uncle's offer, and left London immediately. I am at the inn where the coaches put up. I ask you to allow me an interview with you. If you refuse me this, I shall leave all my home prospects immediately, and go off to the wild life of the Australian bush. All my earthly hopes have long centred in you: with this hope I have toiled, and at length have succeeded in reaching a moneyed independence, which, apart from you, has no value for me. I only ask you to grant me an interview.

"Yours faithfully,

"SAMSON SMITH."

This request was granted. It ended in a promise

that Jane would the next day enter on a visit to the farm, while Samson went on to prepare the way for her. His heart had at length been stirred to its depths, aroused, and called forth. This changed the surface; the silent soul found expression. Emotions that had long worn their deep channels within now enriched the outer life, and gave to the countenance and manner a kindling expression; all seemed to see him transformed; his mother's heart was content, the true life of her son was manifest now. It was no change from without, the effect of a passing position, as may too often be seen; this was an unfolding from within of that which had long been gathering there, — the hidden wealth of one lonely heart, which had at length found the fellowship which could draw it out. All rejoiced in the hope, and Jane was betrothed.

Samson would yield to no lengthened delay; he said he could do nothing without her: could not choose a home, nor chair nor table to put in it; could make no household arrangements, until Jane was his bride. So the weeks were but few when from one of the old churches of that pleasant town the wedding-bells rang, and Jane left all the dear haunts of her childhood to live in London, and there prove the ever-increasing influence of a life rich in faith, hope, and charity.

Farmer and Mrs. Smith had now seen two of their sons married, with every prospect of comfort; and

they soon after this welcomed the intelligence from Joe of his prospect of being received as a son in Mr. Butterworth's family. The second daughter, Jessie, was his affianced bride; and Joe assured his parents that Jessie had a greater longing to visit the old farm-home than to explore any countries abroad.

And yet, once more before we close our tale, we must tell of the sound of glad marriage-bells borne on the summer breeze, not from the old town, but from the village, where we have grown familiar with hall, and farm, and cottage life. Far over the woods rang those glad marriage-bells, bringing William and Mercy in their best array to the church, while Sukey once more stayed at home, — Sukey's wedding-day, though nearer by three years, not having yet come, — so she stayed at home for *mediation*, as she said. It was rather supposed that she meant meditation, but *mediation* had its place in her service that day, for a little rosy boy was at play on the floor, and an infant girl in the cradle, who sometimes raised a cry; but Sukey assured them both that such children as they were could no otherwhere be found, and that let what might happen, they never must cry. To this the boy Willy gave assent, saying, "Ay;" but the baby doubted the fact, which doubt she proclaimed by a vehement scream, upon which Sukey lifted her rosy arms out of cheese curds, leaving them to drain alone, and, taking up the screaming baby, she rocked her and sang. Not a peddler's song now;

no, Sukey had forgotten all songs not worth singing, and chief of all to a baby, for she said, "There is no telling how much they may know, for it isn't words that prove wisdom; of that I am sure." So she rocked the baby in her comfortable arms, and as she rocked her she sang the cradle hymn, which she said she had learned on purpose to quiet the babes when nothing else would. Sukey's voice was a pleasant one, and, rocking softly, she sang; and, when she had finished, the baby was sleeping, and little Willy had laid down his little head on her foot, and was fast asleep, too, with his arm round the neck of his little horse of wood.

Old Dolly sat up in her bed at the sound of the bells, and, folding her hands, asked a blessing on the bridegroom and bride.

Constance was never forgetful of her aged friends; she came continually to see them, and from her old Dolly had learned all the expectations beforehand of what was to be. No one took a greater interest in the affairs of the world without than old Dolly, bed-ridden within four cottage walls. But a new world had opened on her view, and its objects, invisible to sense, but ever brightening on the vision of faith, now engaged her affections, and drew her thoughts upward. Still she retained a ready responsiveness to all that called forth fellow-feeling; and she was well content to be left in her little cottage alone, that old Nathaniel might try to get as far as the church

and the park, and come back with the tidings of all things to her; so he was gone, dressed in his best, to see and be seen.

Over the shivered stem of the blasted forest-tree rang those cheerful bells; down the comfortable tall chimney of old Peggy they rang — they had to drop down with skill, for a chimney-pot on the top made the hole but a small one to let outward things in: this suited the smoke, which now rose in all weathers, and often curled in blue wreaths like the cheerful hearth's coronal. But the bells found all silent within, except the tick of a white-faced clock that hung upon the wall, and seemed to tick louder when left all alone. Two good hours before old Peggy had set out, — set out from that little home, rich in comfort for age, where Maud too grown older was often seen sitting, having taken old Peggy for her particular friend. The old woman wore that day a short-sleeved gown of black ground, covered over with convolvulus and other flowers of rich hue — even tulips bloomed on that old-fashioned print; and as it was made scanty, in old Peggy's style, you saw the more plainly the flowers in full view. "'Tis lovely!" old Peggy said, when any admired it; and then said no more, for she liked not talking of dress; yet she did look at the flowers sometimes when alone, and aired it the oftener, for it "looked lovely," she said "hanging up to air!" Over this, on that summer day, she wore her red winter cloak, for she said

"it was a day on which she was bound to make a procession of all the best things she had;" and above these rose the prettiest of little black bonnets, — it was thought the most becoming of all Betty Cox ever made. And some said they had seen a tear drop on her work as she ran the reevers, and prinked out the silk, and edged the little bonnet with a bit of black lace for that dear old head, whose firmness had saved the precious lives that seemed appointed to death. So, locking her door safe, old Peggy was gone; and ever as she hastened along she said, "We must be thankful!" And this one truth we may learn as we take leave of old Peggy, that the more thankful we are, the more shall we receive to be thankful for.

Jem's cottage, too, was locked; all were absent from there. Benjamin Tovel stood in a far place in the chancel, with Alice holding one hand and Willy the other. Willy had a high spirit, but the blind man said that with him he was as like a toward lamb as ever one could be in the fold! Further off stood Jem, and Patience beside him, with his baby-boy on his arm. Their pleasant faces had grown still brighter — a light that told of its birthplace, a beam from above, rested there, for they had received Benjamin Tovel in the name of a prophet, and he had brought with him a prophet's reward.

We must not proceed to tell of all who were there; the whole village was present. Mr. Smith was there,

and Mrs. Smith, in her plum-colored silk and white crape shawl; and Rose by her side in festal array. The park was to receive all the guests; only one dear revered face was absent, — Mrs. Clifford's place was vacant. Months before the village mourned for her; her passing away had been as "a gentle wafting to immortal life," and the mother slept by her daughter in the white tomb in the church-yard, and all the sweet work of love from or for that kindly heart was over on earth.

And who was the bridegroom? and who was the bride? The orphan Olivia that day gave her hand to the young village rector, and the village rejoiced. Her birth, her childhood, her youth, her very sorrows, interests, friendships, and joys, had all prepared her for this — the position that above all others asks an angelic life in woman — the helpmeet for one whose life is consecrated to the highest service of God and of man.

Mrs. Brame stood near the bride in her brightening old age, feeble now in figure, but serene in expression. She was dressed in more attractive array than any had seen her in before. Olivia, who always had her own way with her aged friend, had been allowed to choose her attire for that day. Only once had Mrs. Brame denied her anything that she asked; that once was when Olivia had pleaded with her to come and live in the Rectory that was now to be

Olivia's home. Mrs. Brame replied, "If I left my Lady Gertrude, it would be to die! The sight of her bears me up when I feel sinking in age. But be contented, dear child, I will often come down; and we can't do without you: you will be always stepping up here, and then you will see the old woman around whom your young life has grown."

That evening Rose was sitting alone with her mother.

"Why say you will never leave me, child? 'Tis a giving up of your life to the comfort of your father's and mine; and it hurts me to think it may one day leave you lonesome, when all might have been different in a home of your own. You, who have been as dutiful a daughter as ever the heaven shone upon."

"It is not duty binds me, mother; I have no will to leave you. Life away from you and father looks all strange to me. There can be no home to me like your home, my mother!"

The mother saw the smile of devoted love, and never questioned of separation again. So Rose was left in her childhood's home, and love and gladness and blessing still brightened her pathway.

But we may not linger over pictured scenes. A ttle while we have traced them; and those most miliar with life, in its outward aspect and its more dden unfoldings, can best test the truth of the pic- red resemblance. Holy Scripture and experience

alike assure us of this one blessed fact, that "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day!"

THE END.

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